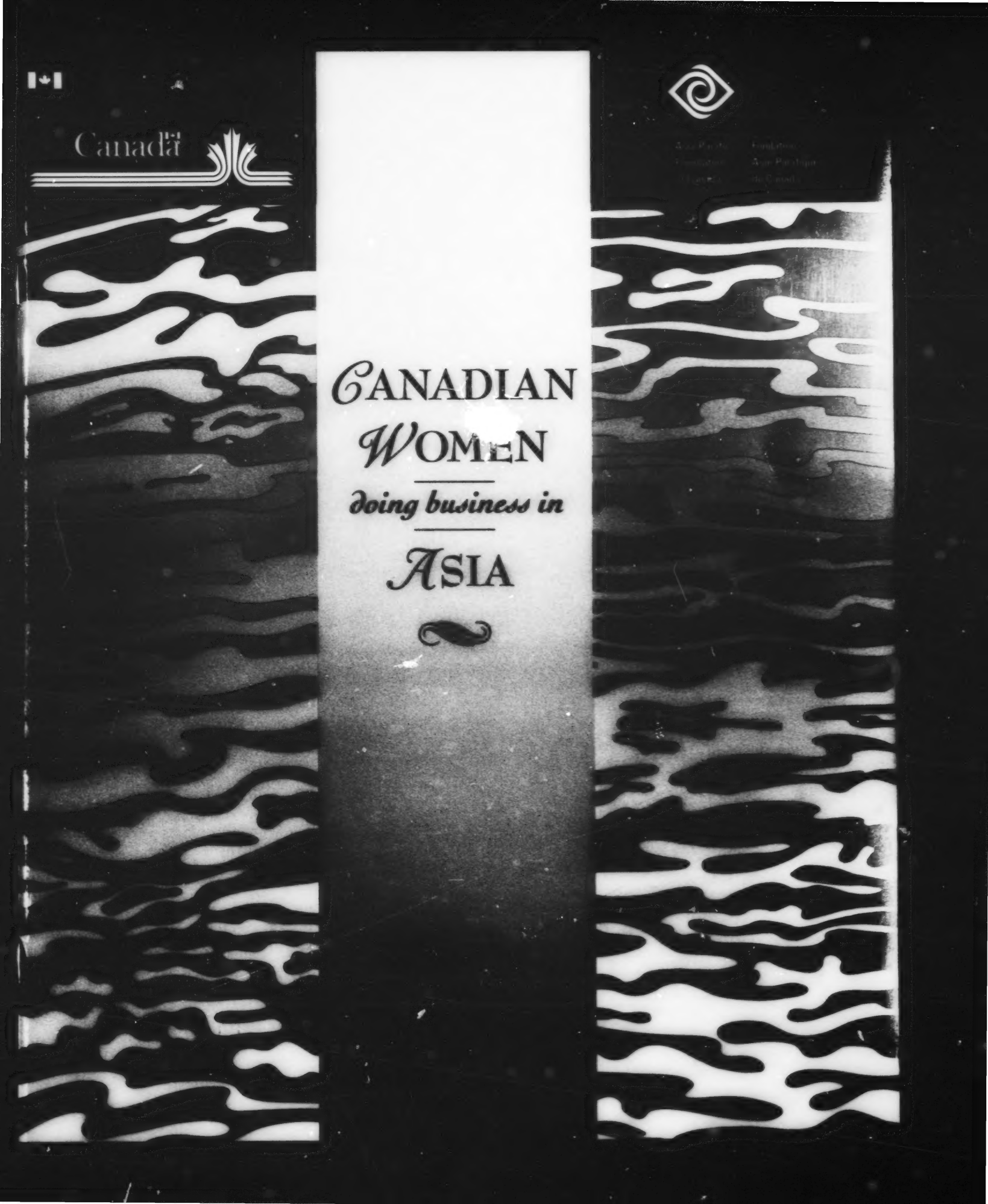
Canada

CANADIAN WOMEN

doing business in

ASIA



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CANADIAN WOMEN DOING BUSINESS IN ASIA

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Increasingly, Canadian women are showing a strong interest in doing business in Asia. Although there is no supporting data, the perception that Asia is a difficult region for Canadian women to conduct business in persists. This report, jointly prepared by Industry, Science and Technology Canada (ISTC) and the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada (APFC), attempts to chronicle the experiences of Canadian businesswomen with expertise in the Asia Pacific region. The report is based on in-depth interviews with a selected number of experienced Canadian businesswomen, and background conversations with dozens of others across the country. The results of this survey suggest that the prevailing myth concerning gender biases against Canadian businesswomen in Asia has little foundation in reality, and may be unduly limiting the use of key assets, specifically the women in the workforce.

This report does not constitute academic research, nor does it present a definitive picture of the experiences of all Canadian businesswomen dealing with Asia. It attempts only to cover a representative range of business sectors, regional interests, and the major Asian countries where Canadian businesswomen are currently active. Only women in the private sector with proven track records in conducting business in Asia were approached, although colleagues in all sectors – business, government, and academe – were consulted for advice. Assistance also came from the Department of External Affairs and International Trade Canada and its trade posts throughout Asia, officers nation-wide of Industry, Science and Technology Canada, members of the Board of Directors and the staff of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, and Asian embassies and their delegations in Canada.

In addition to consenting to interviews where they gave generously of their time and advice, the women interviewed for this study have expressed an interest and willingness to network with other women to mutually enhance the stores of knowledge in doing business with our Asian trading partners. To everyone who assisted with this report, sincere thanks.

INTRODUCTION: CANADIAN WOMEN DOING BUSINESS IN ASIA

The Importance of Asian Business

This report tries to shed light on a few key questions: are there special skills that women bring to the Asian business challenge? Are the barriers to women doing business in Asia real or perceived? And what strategic and operational tips can women who are experienced in this market offer to their contemporaries?

Industry, Science and Technology Canada and the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada undertook this study because trade with Asia is vitally important to the nation's well-being. Indeed, international trade is more important to the Canadian economy than it is to Canada's two largest trading partners, the United States and Japan; 30 percent of Canada's gross domestic product depends on trade, whereas the figure for Japan is only 14 percent, and for the United States a mere 10 percent. With one in three domestic jobs dependent on exports, Canada's ability to be a smart trader will affect whether our current high standard of living can be maintained.

This study was also undertaken because within government, corporations, academe, and the general public the perception exists that Canadian businesswomen encounter problems in Asia because they are not accepted in so-called male-dominated Asian societies. To date, however, evidence to the contrary has been occasional and anecdotal. Due to a growing interest in Asia by Canadian businesswomen, it was decided to examine some common perceptions by gathering a body of knowledge which would be useful to both businesswomen and their employers.

Organization of this Report

The introduction presents the more generalized comments by the interviewees and an overview of the general issue in this study: overcoming the myth about gender bias in Asia. Because each country is unique, a separate chapter has been devoted to each of the six countries covered – China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand. To encourage women and their companies to do business in Asia, each chapter reviews some of the perceptions about conducting business in a particular country, offers tips on business practices, preparation, using contacts to advantage, meetings, and after-hour activities. The final chapter presents general market and business advice which applies throughout the region.

The Study and the Interviewees

Twenty-two women were interviewed in-depth for this survey. Interviews were based on a questionnaire which covered personal background, the company's business strategy, and advice on business practices in one or two countries where the interviewee had the broadest experience. All interviewees had pursued either business development or sales in Asia for more than two years. Six had done so while living in Asia. Two still live there; the other 20 now operate in Canada – one in the Atlantic provinces, three in Quebec, and eight each in Ontario and British Columbia. Sixteen women were either the head or partner of small businesses; the other six worked in large firms. Many were in either sales or international business consulting; fewer were in manufacturing; several moved between these activities.

Interviewees came from a variety of backgrounds, although it is not suggested that they represent a cross-section of Canadian businesswomen. Two-thirds seem to have had bilingual or multicultural exposure in their formative years, and nearly all speak more than one language – helpful factors in any international business. Their biographies appear at the end of the report.

Canadian Women and Gender Biases

Professor Nancy Adler of McGill University has done ground-breaking research on North American female managers working in Asia.[1] In her study she found that nearly three-quarters of the North American companies that she surveyed believed that foreigners are prejudiced against businesswomen. Their reasoning is that so-called male-dominated Asian cultures do not accept women – local or foreign – in the business world. Interviewees included in this report further debunk this myth and confirm that Canadian businesswomen can be highly successful in Asia. Their comments seem to dovetail with Professor Adler's conclusion:

First and foremost, foreigners are seen as foreigners. Therefore, the rules governing the behaviour of local women, which limit their access to management and managerial responsibility, do not apply to foreign women.

There are important implications for all who believe that Canada's long-term interests in the region are served by encouraging the widest possible participation by managers and entrepreneurs in this market. Our survey shows that the gender myth may be causing Canadian companies to hesitate at putting females into important positions in Asia. It may also be causing women to "de-select" themselves from pursuing business opportunities there. To be competitive, we need to [illegible] our best human resources in Asia, regardless of gender.

[illegible] N., *Pacific Basin Managers: a Gaijin, Not a Woman*, Human [illegible]rce Management, Summer 1987.

Canadian Women in Business in Asia

Business and trade experts maintain that business in Asia evolves from friendly relationships carefully nurtured over time. Developing mutual trust and confidence requires time, resources, and patience. However, this makes the cost of business development in Asia higher than in Canada. Identifying the right contacts at the beginning, cultivating them, understanding the rules of etiquette in their cultural context, and promoting a spirit of co-operation with clients and colleagues is the basis for an effective market strategy. This must occur in Asian cultures where communication is often less direct.

Today, some business theorists argue that there is a cluster of skills in which female managers have particular strength – flexibility, a co-operative rather than an authoritarian approach, patience, team-building, sensitivity, the ability to listen, consult, and seek information and advice, care-taking and interpersonal skills, the ability to encourage interaction and participation, and respect for others' ideas. These skills are highly appropriate for the competitive business world of the 1990s, and some firms are beginning to integrate management practices built around them. Women in business are often able to blend these personal skills in a way which particularly suits the needs of the Asian marketplace.

The following are some insights offered by Canadian women doing business in Asia which underline the linkages between appropriate skills and success in business.

Although it's not necessarily so across the board, the characteristics of North American women are generally closer to Asian characteristics than those of North American men. First, there is less of a tendency to use confrontation as a first resort. Second, they have a greater propensity to build relationships – for men in North America that's often a secondary thing. And third, harmony – women are probably more attuned to this. The idea of saving someone else's face comes more naturally to North American women than it does to North American men. Lorna Wright

While most of the time I don't think it matters, sometimes being a woman can be extremely helpful – when we're seeking sensitive information, for example. We can quietly go to a man, or a woman, and say "I need your assistance." And we are more inclined to acknowledge our mistakes, to save the relationship. But of course some men are also very good at all this. Valerie Shore Cron

Women tend to be better communicators and perhaps have a more relaxed way of approaching problems and finding ways to make people more comfortable and receptive. Claire Seddon

I am not perceived by Japanese customers as being the stereotypical macho tough guy – and that's valuable. When I started in the job, I was jokingly told, "We'll know you've succeeded in entering the Japanese market when we find a Japanese guy crumpled outside your door." Like, this is how tough you have to be for negotiations... but it's not true! If I had made one of our customers lose face, and humiliated him to that extent, I would have failed. You need to maintain relationships and you can't brow-beat and intimidate as people might have done in the fish business in the past
Kimberly Watson

I don't know definitely that being female was an advantage, men do business, I do business. However, I always found that it was very effective when I was able to do business with Indonesian women in authority. I think women – here and there – tend to be more pragmatic about "how" to get something done, and are perhaps more forgiving of any initial misinterpretations about the forms of interaction. Juliana Markus

Common Perceptions About Asia

If the myth of gender bias lacks a basis in fact, are there other misleading impressions which many Canadians have about women in Asia or business practices there?

Perception: Few Asian women are in business.

Reality: Asia abounds with businesswomen, especially in small- and medium-sized businesses. Like their Canadian counterparts, they tend to be under-represented in senior management.

Perception: Asian men do not accept Canadian businesswomen as equals.

Reality: Asian men accept Canadian businesswomen on a par with Canadian businessmen. Most of the women interviewed said, "I never had a problem being accepted," or, "It was never an issue." They felt comfortable doing business in Asia although, like their male colleagues, they had to learn about Asian cultures first. They found that Asians related to them as foreigners, and that age and position seemed more important than gender.

In China they were more interested in seeing whether I could use chopsticks than in my being a woman. I was a foreigner.
Elizabeth L. Thomson

Sometimes they're surprised by my being a woman, but just as surprised because I'm young. Dora Kay

I probably got the greatest respect I ever got in my life in Japan, because I was a young women and all these older men were trying to convince me to change one word in a contract, and I wouldn't. But because of my business card, they knew they couldn't go higher. I was the head of the company. France Bourdon

Many of the interviewees said they had encountered **more** problems being accepted in business by Canadian or European men than Asian men. The following are sample comments (not attributed for reasons of confidentiality):

I have never had problems being taken seriously in Asia, but have had that difficulty in Canada. Senior partners had problems with my travelling so frequently – they just didn't think it was proper for a woman to do it.

I have never had problems being accepted by Asians. It's the senior guy in my own company who keeps saying to me, "It's not a problem with your personality, but Asians like to do business through the old boys' network."

Before we went, my boss kept saying, "I want to bring you along, but I'm not sure how they'll accept you. I'm not sure this is going to work out." I was pretty apprehensive, and after the first meeting or two, I started to doubt myself. But when I started going to Asia on my own, I was just fine.

I have to always look behind me in Western cultures. But in Asia I felt very, very comfortable.

Being a woman is more of an advantage in the Orient than in Canada. They like it if you're soft-spoken, and they will think ten times before they tell a woman "no." Whereas if you ask Canadian bankers for ten thousand dollars...!

Through the experiences of Canadian women in Asia, it is increasingly clear that an Asian gender bias does not exist – at least not in the context of foreign women doing business in the local market. What does exist is a false impression which does not serve Canada's business interests.

Canada is at the crossroads in terms of its competitiveness – in Asia and around the world. Our economy and our leading companies need to make use of every possible competitive advantage. This survey reinforces the notion that Canadian women may have some important social and business skills which can be put to productive use in the Asian market. It can only benefit Canadian trade to see these skills deployed to full advantage.

CANADIAN WOMEN DOING BUSINESS IN CHINA (PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC)

Introduction

Canadian business with the People's Republic of China (PRC) has risen and fallen with political tides. An early wave of enthusiasm in the wake of China's opening to the West in the 1970s was followed by disillusionment with the realities of doing business in the country. Subsequent decentralization and relatively heavy spending by China temporarily revitalized Canadian companies until new austerity measures were introduced. At the time of printing, trade is picking up cautiously after setbacks resulting from the 1989 Tienanmen Square incident. Two-way trade in 1991 was $3.7 billion, with Canada continuing to export much grain, livestock, wood pulp, and paper. Other strong areas of opportunity for Canada are power generation, petroleum and gas extraction and handling, transportation, and communications.

The business environment in China continues to change rapidly, and is only appropriate for Canadian companies, large or small, which can commit large amounts of time and money for business development.

Like many other countries, China has not yet succeeded in its official policy of removing barriers to women's full participation in economic and political life. While most Chinese women of working age are involved in paid economic activity, they also carry the heavy burden of child care, domestic chores, and care of aged family members. Only a small percentage of women hold extremely senior positions. However, many hold middle-ranking positions, and our interviewees have made friends among them.

Common Perceptions About China

Here are interviewees' reactions to some common perceptions about China.

Perception: All you need to succeed in China is to corner just one percent of its huge potential market of one billion people.

Eighty percent are farmers, and they don't want everything we can sell. When somebody says, "We can sell our bike reflector plates in China – there are so many bikes", I say, "Reflector plates make you stand out from the crowd, and they don't want to stand out."
Dora Kay

Perception: Chinese women do not hold positions of authority.

In my area of business, many of the bosses are women.
Maria Flannery

Mme X travels around and makes sure the factories ma[illegible] ture according to my standards. Harma Hill

Perception: Canadians occupy a special place in Chinese hearts; we are well known, well loved, and well entrenched.
Reality: Many Chinese associate Canada only with wheat, snow, and Dr. Norman Bethune. Many Canadian companies have pulled back recently due to political uncertainty, high costs, and slow business development; few have tackled the market without Canadian government assistance. Canadians are viewed as "nice guys" who are not persistent, and our products and expertise are little known and, for that reason, frequently under-rated.

It's hard for them to appreciate Canadian excellence; Canadians don't brag enough. They don't know enough about our expertise – that it's not American. Dora Kay

Perception: Good high-level contacts ensure success.

The high-level contact can be useless if the person who's pushing the pen and doing the technical work isn't on-side. You have to have a good relationship with both of them. Arlyle Waring

A. Business Practices

General

China's bureaucracy and the fluctuations within it present one of the biggest challenges to doing business there. Identify who has foreign exchange, control, and authority. Expert advice may be needed to get this critical information.

Don't be overwhelmed by cultural differences, the mystification, the chopstick etiquette. Get right to the nitty-gritty of how this system works - this is the key. How is the structure set up, what is the legislation associated with it, and how should companies use this knowledge to position themselves for project approvals? You need to know both the organization and the approval process. Arlyle Waring

What we term "corruption" – particularly in the import-export sector dealing with state goods in high demand – exists and may be worsening, although the women contacted for this study did not identify it as a major problem.

Be aware that regional differences can be a factor in your business.

China is a world within a country – religiously, ethnically, culturally, and geographically. The Uigurs in northwest China look like Turks, are Moslem, and will do anything to get back at the Chinese. One tour will go perfectly, and my clients will rave. But the next time, if the guide and the local Uigur don't click, both sides will try to make the tour go all wrong. Maria Flannery

Many international aid organizations and financing agencies are active in China. To be competitive in bidding on projects, check with the Canadian International Development Agency and the Export Development Corporation on how your project fits in with their criteria and programmes. The Export Development Corporation, for example, has a special line of credit for China.

Chinese friends often approach trusted foreign friends with opportunities to trade or manufacture in areas outside their main business sector. Several interviewees have closely considered or pursued these.

While you should be tactful so as not to embarrass anyone, candid statements and assessments of business are quite permissible.

We should sharpen our approach more. I tell them, "My client and CIDA need to know what the situation is, and I need a proposal from you within a week," and they'll do it. You get more respect when you demand more. Arlyle Waring

I advised against the project in front of their president. I went back three months later and my own story was told back to me: the project was too ambitious. I'm very up-front, and they appreciate it. Dora Kay

You can courier contracts or drafts, and fax them 20 times before you go there. It makes no difference; you start from scratch once you're there.

Dora Kay

I'm not abrupt – just very concise and factual. I say, "Sir, it isn't like it was five years ago. I can go to Bangladesh or Sri Lanka and get a better price, with no problems of typhoons or workers walking out." They understand. They read the newspapers, they have TVs, and they've opened up to the West. They're not isolated. Harma Hill

When delays occur, the Chinese may cite the difficulties in dealing with their own system. Interviewees suggested a variety of valid responses:

Be sympathetic. In a society of one billion people with an entrenched bureaucracy – which runs on consensus – even getting approval for a simple letter takes time.

On a transport-related proposal, the Chinese fellow asked me "to please tell your Canadian principal that it may take time to respond, as 35 organizations will be involved in the meeting, and we must put 1,200 people on the street to do the traffic count." Arlyle Waring

Do not give ground. Do not allow people in responsible positions to just blame the system.

In the PRC, factory exports are all controlled by the trading associations: high-tech, clothing, whatever. But the people who say they can't do something are the very people in charge! I trap them, I repeat and re-confirm – "You are the manager here?" Yes. "You give orders?" Yes. "You are responsible?" Yes. "You have authority for this...?" Yes. "Well, why can't it be done?" Harma Hill

Take the middle ground; push but offer help.

Say ,"Don't tell me no, don't tell me why you can't do it. Tell me what you need in order to do it." That's the idea. They will do it if you work with them and help them. Maria Flannery

Avoid business disputes by making and maintaining good contacts. The Chinese rarely resort to the courts to settle business disputes, and when they do, loopholes in their favour are found frequently.

Priorize your contacts to keep costs down. Inform government departments that you cannot host people from outside your area of business focus; your head office considers this as questionable "business development costs" which bring no returns. Similarly, join only one or two well-targeted out-going trade missions. Good follow-up with the contacts you make in this way will be enough.

Watch out for Chinese attempts to establish direct links, thereby eliminating middlemen.

I set up my operation through Hong Kong. The manufacturer in China faxed the plant in Canada directly saying, "We'd like to do business with you", not knowing I owned part of that company. Mainland China sees Hong Kong as a "fat cat." They are desperate to cut them out. Harma Hill

Keep your perspective; it can be difficult once you become a trusted friend.

I was in it for eight years without breaking even. You have to be careful – you get so idealistic that sometimes you lose your business perspective. Maria Flannery

Conserve your energy for business matters and do not be upset by minor details. While improving quickly, China cannot yet provide the same luxuries and efficiencies as Canada.

Don't go to the Silk Road and expect to find North York.
Maria Flannery

Be aware that patent and copyright infringements occur.

Do not put all your eggs in one China basket.

We had to cut staff after the Tienanmen Square incident.
Arlyle Waring

We're lucky to be still around. Our projections were halved for 1989 and 1990. Maria Flannery

Negotiations and Contracts

Negotiations are conducted only in person. They require much patience, and if your contact does not have the needed approvals from various parts of government, expect long delays.

Negotiations usually take five to ten times longer than they do here, depending on people's preparedness and the contentious issues. Arlyle Waring

He needs approvals for what he's doing from the various government departments – budget, foreign exchange, authority to work with a foreign company, etc. You'd better ask him very directly – and watch out for the "optimistic" replies. He may have received approval to pay you in carpets, how you turn carpets into dollars is another question. He may tell you, "I have financing from bank ABC". The Export Development Corporation and our commercial banks have a list of approved financial institutions they can deal with – is bank ABC on that? Check everything! Be careful or you could be there for months while he gets his approvals. Dora Kay

Ask the Canadian Embassy to perform such checks on your behalf, or contact the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations and Trade (MOFERT) directly for their official view; get an official view from anyone who might delay you.

Check with two or three sources – the answers vary so much. Get several positions, just as the Chinese do. Arlyle Waring

Negotiations and decision-making cannot take place outside China, so do not suggest to Chinese travelling in Canada that they review things or make decisions here.

Bargain prices by starting high, but not unreasonably so, and letting the Chinese whittle you down. Price out everything, particularly design, training, and other services.

What? Training's extra? You never told us that! What? The equipment for that's extra – we have to pay? These trips abroad are extra? Everything has to be detailed. Arlyle Waring

Be able to add or delete features in your products or services.

We're not competing against other companies in China – we're up against other COUNTRIES. The Japanese are able, for example, to provide a product with just the bare minimum features the client needs. Sometimes we're not as flexible in terms of cutting down, we're too fancy. It may cost us more to cut down, but they don't understand. That makes us uncompetitive. Dora Kay

Let dollar figures state your case for how higher up-front costs can pay off in durability and lower maintenance – but do not expect to win every time.

Different uses of terminology can create misunderstandings.

They kept saying, "We do not want limited liability on this. We want full liability!" They thought they were being restricted. Arlyle W

For certain transactions you may want your lawyer to be present.

Never lose your temper.

I am very firm; my eyes speak clearly. But I never get angry and lose control. Harma Hill

In Canada if people snap, you think, "Oh, they're being neurotic," and write it off. But in China, if you do that, you lose face immediately and permanently. Arlyle Waring

Distribution

The Chinese may offer optimistic delivery dates to keep you happy. If maintaining long-term relationships with them is important, be flexible – allow extra time for delivery or performance. Otherwise, ask them to specify when they can deliver and make them honour the deadline.

I make them put up a performance bond, so they know I'm serious. I hold them to the deadline. And once I did have to execute the bond. Harma Hill

As for your own delivery times, the Chinese are tough in negotiations about these, but can be accommodating if you are late.

Interviewees encountered no problems with being paid. The Chinese are honest and will often work beyond the letter of the agreement to keep your good will.

In my travel business, I try to explain the Consumer Protection Laws, i.e. if the customer does not get the product, he needs a refund or some kind of compensation. The Chinese may not deny responsibility for a problem, but cannot give us the money we must refund to the Canadian traveller. So they deduct the amount from my next round of business with them, as currency exchange is restricted in China. Maria Flannery

Dealing with Factories

Seek expert advice in how to work with Chinese factories.

It's an art in itself dealing with factories – knowing what will work there, and the laws respecting what you can really do with bonuses and incentives. If you're handling product, you must check immediately what's controlled by Beijing. Export permits are like quotas. Arlyle Waring

Allocate time and resources for monitoring and working on production quality, packaging, marketing, and market research – things Chinese colleagues may not necessarily be conversant with.

It's very sensitive. Some of these factory managers are men who were abroad once and feel they know the market - they've seen things that sell in Canada. Arlyle Waring

Advice is taken seriously only if the Chinese have great faith in the expert. In one instance cited, Canadian strategists pointed out a key new market niche for a Chinese factory, which rejected the idea on the basis of an outside opinion which was uninformed – but more trusted.

Meeting and offering guidance to your Chinese factory workers may result in increased quality.

I have a linen line I'm launching. I sit with the workers on the floor of the factory and do designing and re-designing. They think, "Our own bosses don't do that." Maria Flannery

They remember once I teach them; their quality is high. If they learn how to do it, I can give them more work. And they remember who the woman is that they're making these things for. They're delighted when I come. Harma Hill

In dealings with factories, check – take nothing for granted.

My good friend told me, "They promised me washable silk. And I've checked and it's polyester!" Harma Hill

Diversify your sources of key inputs inside and outside China to avoid delays caused by natural disasters.

Factories prefer large orders to small ones. Have a senior-level contact assist you in placing the size of order you want.

B. Preparation

Our interviewees prepared for China in a variety of ways:

Arlyle Waring recommends talking to people who do business in China, and to those in government who can explain certain well-explored market areas.

People like pat answers. But it's like entering any market, or corporate or business culture – it's changing constantly. Get a number of views on this; diversify your sources. Arlyle Waring

For Dora Kay reading, visiting China, and talking to people played a large role in her preparation.

Maria Flannery, on the other hand, talked to friends and relatives, not all of whom were business people, who knew the country. She also read history and geography, and accounts of people who were in China before the Revolution.

Hannah Fisher found that visits and first-hand experience were the best teachers. She also read intensively, and found the set of "Doing Business In..." books published by the Economist extremely useful. Thorough briefings from External Affairs officers were essential.

C. Using Contacts To Advantage

As in other parts of Asia, business in China evolves from good relationships, and "old friends are best". Developing these relationships takes time, patience, and resources.

I will cultivate a relationship, not to get anywhere in par[illegible] but because I like the person, and I believe in the product, gr[illegible] ideals he represents. Then the business will come. If the Chinese like you, you can do anything – anything you want. If they do not, they look down on you, you're unworthy of their friendship. Maria Flannery

Finding the Right Contacts

In China, dozens of regions and thousands of companies want to do business – but technical expertise, levels of quality, and delivery are inconsistent. Take your time and seek guidance in evaluating contacts.

This is how our interviewees made their initial contacts in China:

Early on, Hannah Fisher met people in the Chinese film industry through assignments from External Affairs and International Trade. She kept in touch with them, and over the years has built on her original network.

Maria Flannery found her contacts through the China International Travel Service ("In those days, there was no other travel agent to go to"). Officials in this agency have given her a lot of help with other contacts.

Harma Hill made her contacts through an associate based in Hong Kong. She has had dealings also with a Chinese export trade association.

Dora Kay's initial contacts were highly-placed officials from China's petroleum sector who were travelling in Canada. The Canadian Embassy also provided help.

A lot of contacts I'd have to write to. If they didn't answer my letters, I'd have to persevere. I'd keep on writing, or going over there and phoning them. I'd just have to keep on trying. It wasn't easy. Dora Kay

Arlyle Waring's old school contacts from her days in Nanjing and Beijing are now scattered conveniently throughout the Chinese trade bureaucracies. Other good contacts were high-level Chinese officials whom she was asked to escort on their visits in Canada a decade ago.

We didn't realize how important these people were until we got back to China. It's not easy to see them in China – you can wait a long time to get an appointment. But they usually will want to see you. They are an important starting point. Arlyle Waring

Other sources of contacts cited by women are the Canada-China Trade Council (Toronto) which maintains offices in Beijing, business contacts made through Hong Kong or Taiwan – both countries do extensive business in China – and CIDA.

Setting up two levels of contacts – one senior and one operational for each business initiative – will give you more control over unforeseen factors which could affect your business.

For example, in taking a businesswoman to visit a factory we [illegible]so take a local political leader, if possible. That tells the factory [illegible]er that our client knows these people. If she has trouble later

with quality, quantity or the delivery date, she has more leverage. Arlyle Waring

Business consultants or agencies with broad areas of interest may consent to brief you on China, free of charge, to learn about you, or to position themselves for future business dealings.

It's good for us to know, as a firm, who's out there with what expertise. Arlyle Waring

Introductions

To meet someone, you will need a phoned-in, written, or personal introduction or recommendation. These can be obtained through the Canadian Embassy or provincial trade representatives, someone in a Chinese organization, or a business consultant with good contacts.

When calling to make an appointment, you may be put through to the liaison office of your contact's agency. Be prepared to wait a long time for your contact himself to get back to you.

The Chinese like to know that you have developed a working relationship with other agencies in China – it gives you credibility and enables them to check you out with a third party.

Keeping in Touch with Contacts – Chinese Style

Keeping in touch requires time, frequent visits, and determined follow-up by telephone or fax. Interviewees advise sending little notes saying, "I haven't forgotten you", or interesting titbits of information. There are many reasons for this: projects take a long time to develop, and you want to remain in position for them. Export agencies that deal with factories are changing rapidly and you need to be abreast of Chinese colleagues' movements.

Be sensitive to the historical and cultural context, and to the fact that your operations are under surveillance. Protect your contacts – they could be criticized for seeming to do special favours for foreigners, or for allowing foreigners to challenge the system or push them too far. Recent political developments have only sharpened this sensitivity.

I couldn't even get one associate in China to send us clippings out of their newspapers. Politically, he has nothing to fear, but somewhere, someone might question it. Arlyle Waring

The Chinese also operate in groups and like to consult with each other – especially because you are foreign. Avoid making responsibilities seem to fall on them personally, rather than on their work unit. Even when writing to Chinese business associates you know well, do not say, "What you could do to help us" but, "What X organization could do." Your tact will be understood and appreciated.

Think twice before deciding that someone is not doing his/her job.

Try to accommodate the person by understanding his background, his work position, how he has to deal in that position with his whole environment. The Chinese live very differently from us. Anticipate the kinds of pressures he has. Understand what he goes through every day – riding a bike to work when it's minus 40 degrees is not pleasant. He puts up with extra things we don't even think about here. Dora Kay

Do not criticize someone during a meeting. Take him/her aside afterward and be frank, but help him/her save face.

Do not promise things you are not prepared to follow through with.

In the warmness of a banquet we say, "I'll send you a copy of that report, or a list of Canadian companies in the electronics industry." I'm always hearing Chinese saying that they were promised things they haven't received – to them it is very important. It seems like insincerity. Arlyle Waring

I once promised some people I'd sell some tapes for them, and then did nothing because the tapes weren't very good. That was really bad. I made them lose face. I should have done something – anything – and gotten back to them. Now I can't go back to those people again. Hannah Fisher

Chinese factories can deal with Chinese-language faxes the easiest. There are many word-processing companies with Chinese-language capabilities, but Chinese foreign students also appreciate making extra money.

Communications can be problematic; faxes often go unanswered, and telephone calls do not always go through.

Understanding the Hierarchies

In a system with fewer monetary rewards than in Canada, rewards are often measured in terms of high-level positions and the influence they wield. Therefore, it is important to show respect for position; understand and learn to work within all levels of China's well-defined hierarchies.

Judiciously use your position to assist your middle-level contacts obtain what they need from their bosses.

There may be times when a client actually needs me to suggest things to senior levels, like sending people to Canada for training, for example. If I suggest it, then they need it; but if my client suggests it, he's just "looking for a trip." Dora Kay

Occasionally you may have to circumvent the system and get access to senior people. They are not only busy and hard to meet, but must be approached with tact, as your contacts may not appreciate your asking their bosses to intercede. Formal events or third parties may provide opportunities.

Some formal events that draw out senior-level people are not just [illegible]*tocol, but also for business. The Chinese expect us to use them* [illegible]*ay, because they do it. We often think, "Gee, I can't talk to*

him because I do not know him." Wrong. We must be very calculating in approaching these people in the limited time we have. You can also invite them to receptions your company hosts, or have a third party invite them. Older people who have studied abroad and are now senior, who are still active in foreign trade or some organizations, or who you have a semi-personal relationship with, can facilitate this sort of thing. Arlyle Waring

When I had some trouble with one person, I reached his boss through the boss's secretary, whom I know well, and who had come to Canada with him. Maria Flannery

D. Meetings

Advise people beforehand why you want to see them. Send a written agenda beforehand; getting information out of a large bureaucracy takes time. Be as specific as possible, so you can find out early if they're the right people to see.

Anywhere there's a huge bureaucracy you say, "I want to meet someone in the Construction Commission", and he turns out to be in charge of water pumps instead of sewage treatment. Arlyle Waring

To achieve credibility, handle meetings formally and respect protocol. Listen quietly and politely to the welcoming remarks of the Chinese, and to their brief talk on their agency.

Form can be more important than content in China. Someone can come in with wonderful technology and a very good project, but if it's not presented properly to the correct people, the correct way, it's dead in the water.

Arlyle Waring

Listen. Canadians think, "Let's get this out of the way and get on to business." But you may never again find out from factory manager Wu how many workers he has, what shifts they work, where they get energy supply, how many days he is shut down per week. This is critical later when developing projects with this group. Listen! Arlyle Waring

Following the introductions, move on to your agenda in a direct and concise fashion, minimizing chitchat. Because there can be language problems, state very clearly what you want, not wasting the opportunity.

If I know the group already, I cut out the generalities. I just brief them on any developments in my company – new projects or directions – and then move on to my specific project. Dora Kay

Acknowledge levels of authority; regardless of who the spokesperson or translator is, address the senior people.

... the horrors we see. The only person being addressed is the guy who speaks English, while the chairman of the Commission is being ignored! These are slights that are not forgotten by old Mr. Wu, who didn't want to meet with this Canadian anyway, but was asked to by So-and-so. Arlyle Waring

Cracking jokes during formal meetings, even with Chinese you know well, is frowned on.

If you are unsure about something say, "I'll check on it and get back to you." Someone may be writing everything down.

Continue to show interest when they discuss things in Chinese among themselves.

Be attuned to the subtleties of body language which are clues to how effective you are being.

Train yourself to be super alert and sensitive to people's eye motions and what they do with their hands – more so than here. Their culture is so old and so deep, we can offend them without knowing it. Hannah Fisher

When the Chinese visit Canada, persuade your colleagues and senior people to use a more formal, Chinese-style format for meetings.

When the Chinese delegation visited the company's head office, the Canadian president was trotted in to say hello. He addressed someone who had a bit of English and didn't even give welcoming remarks – just started in on the company itself. It was embarrassing and counter-productive. Arlyle Waring

Arlyle Waring recommends learning the cultural rules and adapting to them, while at the same time remaining true to one's own set of operational rules and Canadian values. Other views:

When I first started going to China, I was young and impetuous, sassy – and likely obnoxious, to their way of thinking. I wish somebody had told me about the importance of leaving your ego at the door, keeping your voice soft, being apologetic in a formal manner, finding more ways to show respect. I wish someone had said, "Cool your jets" in a way that I could understand how damaging my behaviour could be. Hannah Fisher

Be yourself. Be natural. You can be quiet at one meeting, but you can't hide who you are forever – not after a couple of banquets. In China, either you let your mask down or somebody else pulls it off. Dora Kay

Interviewees were unanimous, however, on the importance of carefully phrasing what one says.

Abrasive North Americans – "I need this and you'll hear from me if I do not get it" – they hate that sort of person. They tell me they like me because I'm different. I say, "And I wanted to know, Mr. [illegible]ow can I go about this? I can only get this with your help." I name, I show the respect I have for him. Maria Flannery

Some interviewees feel that when it is necessary to make negative comments, women are more effective than men.

Strangely, a woman has an advantage – to them, a scolding from her seems less serious than it would be from a man! It's more like mother talking to you, but if your father has to talk to you, it's really serious. Dora Kay

I say, "I like you and want you to succeed, but I can't go on taking all the flak for you. So that's why I'm saying the way you did X last time was unacceptable. THIS is where you went wrong – here, here, and here." Maria Flannery

E. Social Practices

Family matters a great deal in China. Do not pry but be prepared to learn about their families and to talk about yours.

The Chinese are great gift-givers. Separate business and personal gifts; be creative with gifts to organizations (pins and books on Canada are overdone), and keep personal gifts small, bearing in mind not to embarrass them since they may be required to hand them in to their work units.

The Types of Social Functions

Banquets, luncheons, and receptions are common, and are used to develop business as well as relationships.

Go with an agenda of who you want to see and what you want to say. Only after years do you learn how to work a banquet. My clients will say, "Wow! you covered a lot of ground," but look – you'll never meet this man again. If he's there cutting ribbons or something tonight, and you want to know what he thinks about something, it's the only way. Arlyle Waring

It is not considered appropriate for a woman to keep up with the numerous toasts that are proposed. The Chinese may encourage you just to be polite, or people may even try to get you tipsy, but decline politely by saying that alcohol makes you sleepy or ill. Your male associates should probably do the same.

Show warmth towards Chinese colleagues only in ways that they are comfortable with.

Mr. X is very physical, and he was hosting a banquet for Mr. Wu. I looked up and saw his arm around good old Wu who sat there with this funny look on his face. Arlyle Waring

As Your Contacts Get Warmer

Practice a different standard of friendship with Chinese friends. Do relatively more for them, and let them do [illegible] for you. North Americans often establish a surface int[illegible] quickly but only go out of their way for long-term fr[illegible]

Ninety-nine percent of the time, I know the decision from the first meeting, just by watching them and listening to their answers. When you hear something negative like, "Oh, the building is under repair", or "Our government is not interested in this", you know the answer is no. If you hear, "We'll see. If it's free, we'll try to visit. If we can locate Professor Wu, you may be able to...."; it's more positive. If someone gets up and leaves, you know they're starting their research. When you see them writing and nobody moves, you know you have a long way to go.

Maria Flannery

Although the Chinese can be quite formal at the beginning, they can be extremely warm and generous with close friends, and can be hurt if their kindness is not reciprocated.

Do not invite yourself to peoples' homes. Chinese residences are spartan and they may be shy of visits from "rich" friends. Do not drop in without warning; neighbourhood security must be alerted when foreigners visit. If friends invite you to their home, however, go. Remember to take gifts for all the family members, if you are bringing one for your friend.

You may be asked for financial help, or help in getting people's children into North American universities. Assist only your closest friends, as being seen to grant large favours can cast a shadow on your business.

Body contact often occurs on the streets, but people do not otherwise touch each other in public. Handshakes are the common rule. Show physical affection only with close friends, although the elderly and children can be touched in a friendly way.

Invite Chinese friends and colleagues home when they visit Canada. They enjoy the relaxed and informal setting of family dinners.

Singing is a favourite Chinese pastime – be prepared to sing Canadian songs.

Usual conversational ice-breakers may include the scenery, food, or products from the region the person is from, especially if you have been there. It is also common to ask about their families – the children, their ages, etc. – or what they do in their spare time. Accept that Chinese friends may ask about your age, salary, living space, marital status, children, etc., as such details are less personal and private to them.

Humour, in good taste, is welcome.

With somebody who's older and a bit funny, I make a Russian toast. "To our wives and sweethearts, that they may never meet." It's a big treat. The girls turn red, the boys laugh, and the older people are delighted. Maria Flannery

Dress

Wear Canadian business attire, even though the Chinese tend to dress more casually.

Never mind if you look more businesslike than the Chinese. You should look different. They expect you to. Arlyle Waring

They can't always get the nice clothes we can. Honour them by [illegible] something nice; they are fascinated with beauty and good Maria Flannery

CANADIAN WOMEN DOING BUSINESS IN HONG KONG

Introduction

Canadians are familiar with Hong Kong as a tiny free-wheeling colony where fortunes can be made through hard work, entrepreneurship, and fierce competition. Canadians are also aware of the sense of insecurity that exists in Hong Kong over its return to Chinese rule in 1997, resulting in a large flow of Hong Kong investment and immigrants to Canada. In 1991, two-way trade with Hong Kong totalled $1.8 billion. Some of this figure represents goods manufactured in China; as an entrepôt and the second busiest container port in the world, Hong Kong is a middleman, and increasingly is relocating its low-wage manufacturing to the Chinese mainland.

In comparison with many of their Asian sisters, Hong Kong women have attained a high level of prominence in the business world. Traditionally exercising considerable sway over the disposition of family wealth, Hong Kong women today often head their own companies or run branches of family-owned enterprises. In some traditional families, they are denied being active company heads, although among wealthy families, daughters are often groomed for senior management just as sons are. Women can also move up through the ranks; Baroness Lydia Dunn is much admired for rising from a secretarial position to a position of knighthood.

Hong Kong women have been in the professions for decades. Elizabeth L. Thomson, one of our interviewees, noted that when she came to Hong Kong in 1977, she saw female lawyers with white hair – a rarity then in Canada.

A. Business Practices

General

Because business in Hong Kong is more Westernized than in other Asian countries, interviewees made few comments on how business practices differed from Canada. However, Hong Kong is still a Chinese culture, and it takes time to become familiar with it.

I had a couple of foreign gentlemen in Hong Kong for the last six months. They just didn't read people right. We'd go to meetings with Chinese. Afterward they would tell me their conclusions. I'd say, "Is that what you really think? I don't think so. I think he meant this and we should come back to him this way." That kind of judgement only comes from years of experience. Elizabeth L. Thomson

English is widely taught and used in business dealings. Nevertheless, familiarity with the Chinese language can be advantageous.

You really shouldn't go there for any length of time without learning Cantonese. Marietta Nuyens

As with all of Asia, much business evolves from personal relationships.

One of the essences of doing business in Asia is knowing people. There's no doubt about it; it's a contact society. It's about keeping in touch with people, developing a personal relationship. Women are very good at that sort of thing, usually. And it should mean that women can do very well in Hong Kong. Elizabeth L. Thomson

Be prepared to hire and train your own managers – Hong Kong has a shortage of skilled recruits.

Consider operating through a Hong-Kong-based office or agent. Dora Kay, who has tried operating in both Hong Kong and in Canada, finds it difficult to stay in touch from Canada. Elizabeth L. Thomson, a Hong Kong resident, makes the following point:

I don't think Canadian companies should send their own people to live in Hong Kong if it can be helped – it's too expensive and they will quickly prove how much money you've wasted on them. It will take them two years to get to know the local market, and by then they'll want to go home. Elizabeth L. Thomson

Age is respected in Hong Kong business circles.

I told one of my younger (Canadian) clients, "I don't want you to go. I want white hair at that meeting. So you stay home. Don't ask me why a hundred times. Just take my advice that I know Hong Kong – and I know that this is the level of seniority that they'll respect." Elizabeth L. Thomson

Success is also respected.

Men are usually extremely well-groomed: very expensive shoes, shirts, ties. Women dress very fashionably. People like to see people who show that they're successful. Elizabeth L. Thomson

Be friendly, warm, and polite – but be assertive if you need to.

Some of the Hong Kong women are so tough I hear people saying they don't want to do business with them! Elizabeth L. Thomson

Seek advice before giving gifts – or reciprocating.

On their first trip to Hong Kong, Canadians should be very careful about this, they won't know what's right and what's wrong. They should not even consider gift-giving – except small tokens like pens with the company name on them. If people in Hong Kong give

them gifts, they should seek advice from someone who really knows the culture about what to do on their next trip. Elizabeth L. Thomson

Hong Kong is as fast-paced as it is rumoured to be. It is not for the faint of heart or those who shun risks.

As labour costs rise, manufacturing is being transferred to the Chinese mainland, often to Guangdong Province, which, like Hong Kong, is Cantonese-speaking. Most of this business is still done through Hong Kong companies. While much interchange and co-operation occurs, a certain rivalry between the two regions is growing. Many mainland Chinese would prefer to cut out the Hong Kong middlemen.

Modern and Westernized though it may be, Hong Kong still retains its Chinese culture. Accept that until you are known and trusted, your advice will not always be taken.

Whereas Canadian clients will always accept my advice, my Chinese clients often don't. Probably they believe their friends more than they believe me. And I think that's more a function of being a foreigner than of being a woman. Elizabeth L. Thomson

Hong Kong firms are often small, family-owned enterprises with less than 50 employees.

All our interviewees stressed keeping humour away from business settings.

It's just straight business. Don't use humour.
Elizabeth L. Thomson

Money speaks in Hong Kong and people are highly entrepreneurial.

Be prepared and do your homework.

Be respectful of cultural differences.

Be sensitive to the culture. I do feel women have the advantage here. Marietta Nuyens

Expect your Chinese contacts to have access to Western technology.

In the computer field, Chinese staff may need less supervision than staff would in Canada.

They needed less of a hands-on approach, so I adapted my style. But changing your style is something you do naturally with other people. Marietta Nuyens

Keeping abreast of the fast-changing and complex environment of Hong Kong-China business from Canada can be challenging.

I've been to some conferences in Hong Kong about doing things in China, and heard some real experts – people with real hands-on experience. But on the other side in Canada, I've found at many conferences that I've had to listen to people – I knew exactly what they'd done and not done – who pretended to be knowledgeable and experienced, but simply weren't. Elizabeth L. Thomson

Networking with other women, for example th[illegible] groups such as the Business and Professional Women's Association in Hong Kong, or the Women Business Owners Club, can be a valuable source of contacts.

Anyone who comes to Hong Kong is welcome to drop in at our meetings. If you say, "I'm here to find buttons", someone will say, "Well, I'm a doctor but my friend has a button factory" or, "My wife's friend's daughter..." Elizabeth L. Thomson

Negotiations and Contracts

Negotiations are very price-sensitive, and clients may be unfamiliar with paying consultant fees. Negotiations are usually fairly short.

Service and quality are considered highly important.

There is usually a written contract.

You may have to chase clients to get paid.

We always had to invoice and call once or twice.
Marietta Nuyens

B. Preparation

Although interviewees did not prepare for doing business specifically in Hong Kong, they made the following comments:

Accounting firms put out some hard and fast information in little booklets. You should know your basic information, as you can lose credibility immediately if you don't. I've written guides to business here myself. But it's best to talk to people. I would try to tap into a group of people – from big business, small business, ex-pats, someone who ran their own business, a lawyer, an accountant. Sift what they say; weigh it, and keep asking questions. It's best in Asian countries to continually make it clear that you don't know everything and want to know more. Elizabeth L. Thomson

C. Using Contacts To Advantage

Finding the Right Contacts

Hong Kong is tiny compared to Canada, and linking up with a few key people is not difficult.

Our contacts were well informed on the whole community. We didn't particularly have to tap into networks, but we got a lot of business referrals. Marietta Nuyens

Big-name contacts are not necessarily the key to the market.

Develop a very good trusting relationship, where you know the person really knows the business – that he hasn't been sent there for three years by some big firm, and the only person he knows is Mr. Li Ka-shing. If you're an entrepreneur doing business in Asia, you're never likely going to meet Li Ka-shing, and you don't need someone to take you to dinner and regale you with stories about him. You want to get right in there and meet factories. And you do that [illegible]gh resources like the Hong Kong Trade Development people. [illegible] give you lists of factories and you can approach them direct[illegible]st fax them. Elizabeth L. Thomson

Interviewees used the following sources for identifying business contacts: the Canadian Commission in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, the Hong Kong Productivity Council, the Chinese Manufacturers' Association, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the provincial trade offices, industry associations which may have sister-associations in Hong Kong, and service clubs such as Rotary, Lions', etc.

Finding investors, who need to know and trust you, is generally harder that finding suppliers.

It takes a long time when you're from an independent company and you're establishing your own financial pool, your own contacts. It takes a long time to develop the kind of family feeling you need with people. You have to have a lot of patience and ego strength, and not get discouraged. Hannah Fisher

Ms. Fisher was one of two interviewees who felt that gender might occasionally become a factor in negotiations.

I think we were watched like hawks, and tested. Not in a negative way. But we're talking very large deals, and they want to know if you can cut it, or if you're flaky. But of course, it's harder in North America, too, if you're a woman. Hannah Fisher

By contrast, interviewees Thomson and Nuyens noted that businesswomen could face some problems in being taken seriously by the Hong Kong British – but never by Hong Kong Chinese.

I never felt I wasn't being taken seriously by the Chinese because I was a woman, or a foreigner. I think that foreigners enjoy a special status among Hong Kong Chinese because of the British historical involvement. Marietta Nuyens

Introductions

Introductions are needed in Hong Kong as much as in the rest of Asia.

It's very important to say, "I'm introduced by.." to explain who you are, how big, how long you've been in business.

Elizabeth L. Thomson

Who should introduce you? The Canadian Commission, or another business person.

Find somebody from the business associations in Canada, someone with real in-depth, on-the-ground experience. Buy them lunch. Have a list of questions. Try to get them on your side. I would ask them to sit on my board as a consultant, to come to my house for a barbecue, anything. What you want is the sort of advisor who'll tell you, "When you go to Hong Kong, go and see my friend Mr. Wong at the Big Nut Factory and he'll set you up."

Elizabeth L. Th[illegible]

Keeping in Touch with Contacts – Hong Kong Style

Send flowers if someone has been especially kind, or when they open a new business. Thank people by inviting them to dinner.

Expect to do more for your clients than you would in Canada; the line between business and friendship in Hong Kong is not as sharply defined.

You do all kinds of things. You just do anything for people. You take people's shoes out to be re-soled, you pick them up at the hotel, and send money to their kids – all kinds of things.

Elizabeth L. Thomson

Understanding the Hierarchies

In common with other Asian countries, Hong Kong is more hierarchical than Canada.

Handling it requires being conscious and super-alert. You have to figure out where the power is, which takes time. And there are rules. If you start with one person, you never go around that person. Always go back to that contact, and have that person present your proposal to the chairman. Keep that chain of command until the chairman gives you permission to change it. They don't respect your mucking up their hierarchy. Hannah Fisher

You have to figure out who the most senior person is, who you're really talking to, and what the power structure is in the meeting. You do that by listening and watching, by seeing the respect that's given to whom. The best way to do it is to have someone there who speaks the language, who can tell you what's going on. It's hard to read those cultural signals until you're used to them. Elizabeth L. Thomson

Calling someone by his/her first name shows familiarity and a lack of respect.

Don't use a client's first name – ever. People from North America will say, "Well, Sam, what about this?", referring to Mr. Chung, the head of that company! And sixty years old! People almost kiss his feet every morning. And this young upstart from Canada calls him "Sam". Meanwhile, Mr. Chung's calling him "Mr. So-and-so", but he doesn't get the hint. Elizabeth L. Thomson

D. Meetings

Take more business cards than you would for a Canadian business trip.

There's a lot of protocol, and many people who come to Hong Kong break the rules. You MUST have a business card, it's so elementary. So many people arrive without them or bring 50 and say, "Oh, I ran out". And you must have cards printed in English and properly translated into Chinese. Elizabeth L. Thomson

Arrive at meetings on time; it is improper to be late.

When people enter meetings, greet them by rising and hand[illegible]m your business card with both hands. State your name.

Line up business cards in front of you in the order people are sitting around the table to avoid confusion.

If it is a first meeting, strike a positive note during your review of why you are there.

You have to say, "We are such-and-such a company, this is what we want to do here, and we've been introduced to you by Mr. Hung at the Hong Kong Trade Development Council. And he's told us" – you have to be very flattering – "that your company has an excellent reputation and that you always produce goods without flaws. So we'd like to try and do business with you." Elizabeth L. Thomson

Meetings often begin with an exchange of pleasantries, although in Hong Kong you might get down to business quite quickly. Here are two contrasting views:

I'm careful about being too direct and to-the-point. You have to talk around things for a while. Elizabeth L. Thomson

I found meetings very short and to the point, all business. There was no chit-chat, and no personal talk. Marietta Nuyens

Meetings can be long and sometimes they spill over into meals where business conversations can continue.

When hosting a meeting for visiting Hong Kong people, serve tea.

I have been to so many Bay Street offices where I've never been offered anything. And I've thought, "You've got six floors in this huge building, can't you offer me a lousy cup of tea?" Elizabeth L. Thomson

See your guests off at the elevator.

I've found in Canada that people would say goodbye at their door and then let me wind myself through a great big office – you never do that in Asia. You always take people to the front door and show them out. Elizabeth L. Thomson

Be polite, respectful, and not too loud – but Hong Kong people also respect toughness.

I wouldn't be abrupt, but I would be direct. Harma Hill

What Chinese can't cope with is someone's being initially too boisterous and too loud. Women in general don't find it hard to be warm and friendly, and to show some respect and humility. Establish your relationship that way. Then after a while you can get tougher – not in an aggressive or loud way. But they respect businesswomen who'll come back to them and say, "You're charging me too much," or, "These products are shoddy". Elizabeth L. Thomson

E. Social Practices

Types of Social Functions

Lunches and dinners with clients are common social functions, but you may be invited to cocktail parties, receptions, or special events like dinners on hired boats.

As Your Contacts Get Warmer

Sometimes you will meet people's families or be invited to their home.

Hong Kong is conservative, and handshakes rather than hugs are the norm.

Once in while, because I'm a foreigner, I slap someone on the back. I get away with it, but I would never do it to someone I don't know well. Elizabeth L. Thomson

Break the ice in conversations much the same way you would in Canada; learn about the culture by asking questions.

Dress

Several interviewees strongly advised dressing-to-impress, especially if you are seeking investors or moving in higher commercial circles. Others felt it less important. Here are views from a lawyer handling other people's money, a filmmaker seeking investment, a database analyst, and an engineer/business developer:

My beautician friend maintains that if I would take better care of myself and come for a facial once a week, I'd make a lot more money. All her Asian clients do that. They're well taken care of, they look good. It's very important to them. It should be more important to us Canadians too, and certainly when we do business in Asia. Women coming from North America are sometimes very underdressed to do business. Or they wear weird outfits; people think they have no taste – running shoes with suits. You don't have to look conservative, but you must be fashionable! Very well-groomed, well-dressed, manicured, facials, hair done. You need to wear nylons.
Elizabeth L. Thomson

Be as conservatively, elegantly, and expensively dressed as you can manage. Put thought into your clothes. If I had the money, I would get professionally dressed – complete with the most conservative handbag and expensive shoes. It's part of what gets you taken seriously. My partner walks off the plane in Hong Kong and immediately gets a manicure before she goes anywhere at all.
Hannah Fisher

Business dress is the same as here in Canada. Marietta Nuyens

Some women in Hong Kong dress up as if they're going to a big party. I don't see much sense in doing that. Maybe people tend to look at your clothes and make assumptions about what you are. But I would just wear a business suit and not try to knock everybody out. Dora Kay

CANADIAN WOMEN DOING BUSINESS IN JAPAN

Introduction

Japan is Canada's second largest trading partner; in 1991 two-way trade was $17.36 billion. Japan is home to 123 million people who are one of the most demanding customer groups in the world. Able to afford a huge variety of imports, they are selective and expect higher quality and service levels than North Americans. Their domestic market operates on a just-in-time philosophy – small inventories and prompt delivery – and competitors whose performances are substandard do not survive. While Canadian firms in the high-tech and manufacturing sectors are making inroads in Japan, our top exports continue to be commodities: minerals, coal, and wood products. Breaking into this market requires high performance levels and persistence.

Today, almost 40 percent of Japanese women work outside the home. Because of better advancement opportunities into management ranks there, many young women are delaying marriage and working for small- and medium-sized companies, or joining foreign firms located in Japan. Faced with an acute labour shortage, however, large Japanese companies may soon have to promote their highly educated female workers. It is increasingly common to meet female managers in Japanese firms.

In retrospect, I would say our Japanese sales gave our company an unbelievable edge in selling to our domestic market. North American buyers feel if your product is acceptable in Japan, it must be high quality.

Oonagh McNerney

Common Perceptions About Japan

Some women may be apprehensive about conducting business in Japan because of impressions that females face particular obstacles. Here are some of these impressions, and our interviewees' reactions.

Perception: Japan is the toughest Asian country for a Canadian woman to do business in.

Reality: Japan is a tough market for all foreign businesspeople, regardless of gender. Interviewees do not find the Japanese unreasonably tough and feel comfortable dealing with them. The number of suggested participants for this study who deal primarily with Japan were more numerous than for any other country in Asia.

Perception: The Japanese will not accept young, female business partners.

A Canadian representative overseas told me to "Forget it" when I got started. I thought, "Thanks a lot!" France Bourdon

Perception: One must be extremely "tough" with the Ja in negotiations; one woman was facetiously told th proof that she was a good negotiator would be "the sight of a Japanese fellow crumpled outside her door".

Untrue. If I had made one of our customers lose face and humiliated him to that extent, I would have failed. You need to maintain relationships and you can't browbeat and intimidate others in business as people might have done in the fish business in the past.
Kimberly Watson

Perception: The Japanese will copy products.

We've heard that for years and still our product doesn't have a copy there. If you want to sell in the global marketplace, you have to get out and show your product! Oonagh McNerney

Perception: The Japanese will steal ideas and give nothing in return.

Folklore. They'll give you something back on very tough terms. It's a rough, competitive situation there, and they'd be just as rough with a local company, so why should you be treated differently? Germaine Gibara

A. Business Practices

The following remarks by the interviewees can be found in most standard texts on doing business in Japan.

General

Expect the Japanese to take a long-term view of business.

The Japanese expect quality, promptness, excellent service, and delivery on time. If you cannot meet their demands, avoid the market. But if you can, you can likely sell anywhere in the world.

Japanese intelligence systems are excellent; one interviewee found patents for her product on her client's desk the first time they met.

Government rules and regulations are respected, and interviewees found the business culture fair and honest.

Learn from Japanese business practices – quality circles, the constant search for increased efficiency, orderliness, and the just-in-time inventories. Oonagh McNerney found these practices could serve to motivate her own employees.

Choose your agents carefully as some may be looking for business referrals rather than making your interests their main priority.

Co-operation is the key, so when selling to Japan be pre- to buy from them as well.

Work with them to reduce costs and save them money; change the assembly method, increase the quantities bought, work hand-in-hand to reduce prices, or arrange financing that will cut costs.

Negotiations and Contracts

Generally, Japan is less litigious than Canada and lawyers are used less frequently in negotiations.

Price negotiations may be slow and repeated discussions of negotiations may be necessary.

Negotiating with the Japanese is like a game, or a dance that begins on Day One of the fishing season and continues until the end. After three years of this, I know what they're going to tell me at that first meeting! "Oh, the market is terrible this year, and we don't want to buy anything and the price is awful." So the first meeting is a waste of time. Various dinners and friendly exchanges ensue, but nothing really happens until the fourth or fifth meeting. So you have to be patient and approach it with a positive outlook – these are pleasant people with whom you want to expand your relationship. Do your homework, counter their comments on consumption levels or whatever, but take it a bit tongue-in-cheek. Keep your humour about you. Kimberly Watson

In Canada, one may arrive at a contract quickly only to dispute the terms for several years. In Japan reaching agreement is a long, thorough, and sometimes frustrating process, but because everyone ends up in agreement few litigations occur.

I just sat there listening, not moving – and letting them think. They would offer me different phrasing for that point in the contract, and I'd say "Sorry, I can't accept this." But I'd always remain calm, even though I was steaming inside. We were stuck for three weeks.
France Bourdon

Although contract negotiations can be protracted, the document itself may be short.

In a case where the other party claims that government approval for a contract is required, seek third-party advice.

Distribution

The usual payment period in Japan is 120 days rather than our 30 or 60. They may accept a shorter payment period if you deliver from outside.

Shipments and freight rates can be confusing so do your homework.

B. Preparation

Learn about the culture and how business is done.

Grasp and respect the culture – it's essential. Understanding what type of relationships people have in the culture – even what it meant when two people bow to each other – will help you kee[p] contacts. I prepared myself well by reading about doing business with Japan and about its management style which is a philosophy in itself. Books published by External Affairs and the Délégation de Québec in Tokyo are very good. France Bourdon

Extensive research and reading will help, but will not provide all the answers.

Reading and private study are obviously essential. But so are talking with other business people and visits. The very first time I went I learned a lot just by being there, being sensitive, and reading lots of books and articles. I also had some Japanese friends, and a Japanese secretary. From this and subsequent visits, I learned how to do business in Japan. When it came to business strategy, again I read because I thought that's where I'd find the answers. I ended up inventing the answer, however, because there's no such thing as The Answer. But I read just about every book that was written on approaching the car industry and understanding how they work.
Germaine Gibara

There are books on local customs and the like, which I read. But you really have to do your own homework. Government agencies give the same information to everyone. There's no advantage to getting it unless you can score much higher than everyone else for the same product. As for market reports, I wrote the federal government's 1989 market study on Japanese herring roe technology! As long as these studies are current, they can help. But they get out of date fast. Prices and markets can deteriorate, especially if you're in commodities.
Kimberly Watson

Some people cannot prepare before their departure. A decade or more ago, for example, not much relevant material was available for Oonagh McNerney, but today she has practical advice.

Before you go know your product fully. Take brochures or other materials written in Japanese, and take videos or commercials, because almost all offices have VCRs. Have pictures of your plant or office, or your booth at a trade show that you've attended. These are useful because most times you're operating at a disadvantage linguistically and a picture is worth a thousand words.

Learn at least 10 useful phrases in Japanese. It's still expected and important to take some liquor such as Canadian Club or Scotch, but easy-to-pack, inexpensive gifts which are currently popular are Club Monaco T-shirts and Blue Jay momentos. On arrival make sure you have at least 5,000 yen on hand. This will buy you a ticket for the bus and you can be on your way to your hotel minutes after clearing customs. After a long flight it's another long bus ride into Tokyo, so be prepared.

Be prepared for the subway stations which just seem to go down, and down again! Doing business in Japan means [m]ake as many calls as you can in a limited time frame. Therefore,

be ready to do a lot of travel on subways, JNR rail, and bullet trains. If you are there on business you have to move fast, and you don't go by taxi in Tokyo. Oonagh McNerney

Japan's physical environment also poses challenges for Canadians.

The crowding! We're used to big rooms and lots of desk space for writing letters. Over there, it's like being in a nun's room.
France Bourdon

C. Using Contacts to Advantage

Finding the Right Contacts

Interviewees suggested the following sources for contacts in Japan:

- educational institutions
- school contacts from Japan
- trading houses
- magazine advertisements
- the Canadian Embassy or Consulates
- referrals and introductions from Japanese business contacts
- trade shows
- consultants

Interviewees stressed the importance of cultivating friendly relationships with the female staff of Japanese clients. They can provide good tips on how to be effective in their cultural context.

Finding contacts is not difficult but it requires time to carefully identify the right ones.

To sell two containers to a mass merchandiser was an unbelievable opportunity, so I jumped in without realizing that was not the best way to introduce our product. Oonagh McNerney

If you are in a highly technical business, get close to a professor working with a Japanese company. Universities and the business community in Japan work closely together.

Introductions

Introductions to Japanese firms can make the initial approach much smoother.

Try to imagine you're Japanese and somebody calls and says "This is an incomprehensible company limited, and I'm calling on behalf of some foreign name." It's a shock to them right away, and they don't know what's going to come in the door at the appointed time. My name wouldn't indicate that I was a woman. I'd walk in and it would be panic, let me out of here! But if you get somebody else to call and say, "A woman who works at one of the big foreign brokers would like to meet you and don't worry – she knows about the business," then it's quite different. Deborah Zbarsky

Take the time to find the appropriate person to introduce you.

A friend I had gone to Harvard with worked in one of the [illegible] ing houses – trading houses in Japan are powerful. From hi[illegible] suggestions as to who to approach and how. I then used the everyone else's contacts until I got to the right people with the right introductions, the right preamble, the letter sent two months in advance, and the dinner arranged afterwards – all of the things which are part of the decorum of doing business in Japan. But remember, these contacts are accessible to anyone who's smart enough to go after them. There are people in Canada, the United States, or Europe who can open doors. You just have to find them where you can. Germaine Gibara

Keeping in Touch with Contacts – Japanese style

In Asia one must work at keeping in touch with contacts. The Japanese, in particular, take a more deliberate, formalized approach. They often send one another notes about their promotions and transfers. Interviewees said they continue to get notes from contacts they have not seen in years. Resist the Canadian tendency to not contact people without a specific reason.

When I was living in Japan, for example, I would call someone up when I saw something in the paper about his company. But now that I'm in Canada, I have to drum up other reasons to keep in touch because a Christmas card once a year is certainly not enough. Every time I go to Japan I have a long list of people I phone. Sometimes it's really hard because I don't know what to say to them, and I worry that they won't remember me because it's been a long time since we met face-to-face. But you just have to keep going. Deborah Zbarsky

The keeping-in-touch process in Japan is also more comprehensive than in Canada.

There are two seasons in Japan – one around Christmas and New Years, and the other at the end of June – when greeting cards and gifts change hands. That's one of the reasons you pass out the business card, so that when it's time to send the cards at Christmas, everyone you know will receive yours. You never let anyone look at your business card file, it's like a journalist's jewel box of contacts. Anyway, some people think it's easy in Japan because you just go to a printer and get the Christmas cards made up. I find that hard because that's not how Canadians are brought up to do things.
Deborah Zbarsky

Err on the side of formality with letters and faxes.

With my clients or sources of information, such as company spokespeople, it's quite formal. When I write to them I say things like, "I have recently established my own business and I am just writing to let you know." You make those kinds of excuses. They don't want to hear, "Hi, I just came back from a holiday." Deborah Zbarsky

[illegible]s contacts warm to you over time, personal notes help [illegible]p in touch.

I make a point of always sending Christmas cards. This year was special because my twin boys were born, so I made a point of telling my customers that I was on maternity leave. It makes them feel that you are acknowledging past business dealings, and lets them know what's happening in your life – that you don't just spring into existence every snow crab season. Kimberly Watson

Go to Japan regularly to cement contacts and relationships, especially in the development phase.

One mistake took six months to correct and almost lost me the contract. I was away from my Japan file because something else had erupted in Europe, and I sent faxes to Japan thinking that I was being read and understood. The thing went haywire. I had to stop what I was doing and go back for face-to-face contact. Once you're in an operational mode, the fax and telephone are fine. But not until you have signed a contract and really have developed a working relationship with them. Until then, negotiations cannot be done any other way than face-to-face. Their mastery of the nuances of the English language is not as strong as ours. Besides, it just isn't the way they work. They don't develop relationships over fax lines; this needs personal contact. So you must spend the time. We nearly broke our backs – we went there every two months for a week to ten days, depending on the number of customers we had to see. But it was worth it. Germaine Gibara

Do not take casual contacts for granted.

When you first meet them, you might think in a business sense that, "This person may be very nice but he can't help me." But in five years he might be in a position to help. People in Japan move around all the time. They'll spend two years in the shipping division, then that division, and then another. Deborah Zbarsky

If Canadian colleagues provide the names of personal contacts in Japan, call them. They are probably used to being contacted by friends of friends and may be able to help you.

Keeping in touch by yearly attendance at trade shows is not enough.

There's a lot of discussion about trade shows. I always go to one big one; it's critical to be seen. But the time people spend with you is strictly limited – perhaps one exposure. There isn't time to stand around and shoot the breeze. It doesn't seem to be common knowledge, but the real business doesn't happen there anyway. People think "I'll see all my customers there.." but the real business happens later, when you call at their office. These appointments can be made before you leave Canada, but often your hotel phone rings and you have to be flexible and accommodating to their schedules. Oonagh McN[illegible]

Understanding the Hierarchies

The Japanese work within a strict hierarchy which they expect you to respect. Going around it North-American style by insisting on talking to someone at the top may be accommodated because you are a foreigner. But you risk being considered a loose cannon, or worse, causing your Japanese counterpart to lose face before his colleagues and superiors. Generally speaking, avoid going up or outside the established hierarchy. If your contact is a problem, go sideways for advice first.

It's essential to understand hierarchies. You just don't trespass. The president will meet the president of a division, but my senior engineer should not ask to meet the president. It's extremely difficult to go outside the hierarchy; you can go down but you can't go up it. It's not accepted, and although they might agree to come, they just don't show up. They send someone else, so why create an affront?
Germaine Gibara

There were times when I successfully approached other Japanese brokers and explained that I was finding someone in Such-and-so a company useless and wanted to deal with his boss, so what should I do? Sometimes they would help. "I'll go in to see him," that sort of routine. But at other times it didn't work, and the whole relationship with the company just fell apart. Deborah Zbarsky

Never turn down a business card in Japan, even if you think you already have the person's card. It may be a clue that he or she has been promoted and that congratulations are in order.

In Japan, senior people may meet you out of courtesy, but the decisions about your business are often made by a lower-ranking person after a consensus within the firm has been reached. It is not always easy to tell who is in charge.

Japanese business cards show so many different managers. In big companies they'll have what they call their marine department, which might have sections 1, 2, and 3, each with about six different managers and directors, and all the names translated directly from the Japanese. You can't really tell by the name who's higher on the totem pole, and it's important to know that. Again, it's awkward when it comes to seating arrangements at dinners. As their guest, I'm expected to be seated first, and it's hard to know whom I should be sitting beside. The only way I've figured it out is by checking with North American offices, or if I know one of the gentleman better than the others, I'll say, "And how does your position compare with this gentleman to whom I've just been introduced?", very tactfully, so it doesn't look like I'm trying to one-up him and talk to his senior. Kimberly Watson

Deborah Zbarsky suggests that, when in doubt about who to follow-up with after the meeting, call one of the people and say, "I don't want to bother you. Should I be talking to [illegible]-and-so on this?"

Senior people in Japan often attend ceremonially on important occasions. Persuade your senior people to reciprocate when Japanese colleagues visit.

D. Meetings

In terms of size, protocol, function etc., meetings in Japan are run differently than in Canada. To make the Japanese comfortable with you and to further develop good relations, interviewees suggested the following approaches:

Remove your coat and gloves in the elevator and carry them, rather than having to undress in someone's office with their staff looking on.

Expect your foreign looks – clothes, hairstyle etc. – to attract attention from the people working in the open office design. It is not meant to embarrass you.

Gifts should be wrapped. If a subordinate accompanies you, have him/her carry them.

Expect to be outnumbered at meetings; this is the culture, not intimidation tactics.

Take large quantities of business cards printed in Japanese. Exchange cards on entering the room and, once seated, arrange them in front of you in the order in which people are seated.

Correct seating arrangements matter; if unsure, quietly ask someone where you should sit. Guests often sit facing the senior person.

Remarks at first meetings are often formalities and ceremonial. The Japanese side may have a junior staff member give a short briefing on their company. Based in Japan and pressed for time, Deborah Zbarsky would try to move quickly through this stage by showing her knowledge of the company's annual report. However, Oonagh McNerney, only visiting Japan, notes:

I believe that listening to this presentation is very important, because they really value and respect their company, how many employees they have, and what their gross sales are. You never hear about a Japanese company without seeing charts on how well they're doing this year compared to last, how many units, and so on. They're proud of that information, so you've got to look attentive and make notes on it so that you can refer back to them to show you have as much information on their company as they have on yours. Oonagh McNerney

When a business relationship with a Japanese company has been established, meetings often start with general enquiries about your trip and a brief review of how business is going for both sides. There is no need to jump into specific details at this point. Do not mention any negative stories you have heard about the other company; never embarrass anyone.

You will be expected to talk about your own company. Refer to it as "our" company, and "we", as the Japanese do.

For important negotiating sessions, bring your own interpreter. Interpreters are often female and can be valuable allies if you take the time to brief them before meetings, explaining your product or service, and asking for their advice in getting your message across. An interpreter can only handle a few sentences at a time, so break your talk into segments and wait for her to finish.

Unless you are the senior person from your side, minimize talk until indicated to do otherwise. Avoid interrupting conversations with personal opinions (ie. "I don't agree with you", etc.) that contradict your own side. Sort out disagreements before or after the meeting; you should present a united front.

Be alert and maintain eye contact with the senior Japanese people while Japanese is being spoken, and again while it is translated for you into English.

I've seen people sit back and close their eyes during the Japanese conversations and only open them when the interpreter speaks English – dreadful! Oonagh McNerney

Do not be surprised if the Japanese side responds to your presentation with questions in English. The interpreter is there to ensure that both sides fully understand the proceedings.

Be patient when the Japanese are silent for long periods when framing their responses. You are not expected to ramble on to "jump start" the conversation.

It's extremely disturbing in negotiations when you first face a big silence – it could be two minutes and you don't know what to do, what's going on. France Bourdon

Japanese colleagues may be proud of their English-language abilities so do not insist that they speak to you in Japanese through an interpreter. Be tactful and allow extra time for meetings.

A memo, summarizing what was agreed upon, probably will not be circulated after the meeting – indeed, no agreement may have been reached.

Decisions are not made at meetings. Don't try to force things the North American way as it just doesn't happen. You can try until you're blue in the face. They'll sit with you until seven in the morning if you wish – they'll be there. But nothing is going on, and you leave the next day thinking, "What have I done – wasted my time and my money?" Germaine Gibara

Meetings can be extremely long. Expect to be questioned on the most minute details of the business at hand. It is not unusual to receive more sets of questions from the Japanese afterward.

The Japanese may need time during a meeting to consult among themselves in their own language.

If, during discussions with a client, you find that someone on your side has misinterpreted your intentions, discuss it privately after the meeting to avoid anyone losing face.

Follow-up your meetings with thank-you letters to everyone who was present.

Do not drop in to a Japanese colleague's office "because you happened to be in the building, and thought you might have a coffee". It is generally considered rude.

The Japanese do not usually touch each other in public.

E. Social Practices

Social invitations help to build relationships. As many Japanese have long work days and long commutes home, sign off early.

When declining an invitation, it is more common to cite work-related reasons than fatigue or jet lag.

The Types of Social Functions

Several interviewees have been invited to people's homes, but this apparently is rare. The Japanese do not normally entertain at home.

Going out for a drink or dinner directly after work is very common in Japan. Indeed, it is an important way to cement relationships. Drinking and even singing with colleagues after hours is an acceptable way of relieving stress, and discussions usually avoid business topics. Conversations may become personal and boisterous but behaviour is generally good-natured. Interviewees suggested a range of options: keeping up with the others, pretending to keep up, drinking non-alcoholic beverages, excusing oneself after one drink, suggesting dinner in a restaurant instead.

Some of the interviewees felt uncomfortable being invited to hostess bars. Hostesses are paid to pamper clients and flirt, even to the point of asking intimate questions, and one may be "assigned" to keep you company. Interviewees suggested viewing hostess bars as a learning experience or a piece of light theatre, using humour to decline an invitation, or suggesting to hosts that the evening be spent at a cultural event or dinner instead.

Do not become so obsessed with Japanese rules of etiquette as to become overly self-conscious, or too worried about having broken the rules. Foreigners are not expected to have mastered Japanese ways, although if you have, your efforts will be appreciated. Being sincere, polite, and knowledgeable allows minor eccentricities to be forgiven.

In an unusual case, an interviewee unexpectedly met with resistance to her joining a golf tournament between Canadian and Japanese businesspeople. Since the event was to be held in Canada, she chose to press the point and joined the game. Women do play golf in Japan.

As Your Contacts Get Warmer

Do not initiate physical affection, even with long-time business acquaintances or personal friends. Do not discuss intimate matters as the Japanese prefer discreetness in this area. Tasteful humour is welcome, but crudity in women is frowned upon.

Dress

Casual business wear does not mean slacks and sweaters.

As with men, business dress for women in Japan is conservative – dresses, skirts, and jackets in darker colours. A small collapsible umbrella is very handy. For ease of walking in the subway system wear medium or low-heeled shoes.

Evening clothes are rarely worn as there is usually no time to return home to change after work. In one case, knowing that male Japanese colleagues would be wearing dark business suits gave an interviewee an opportunity to create an impact at her press conference, by wearing colourful clothing. Otherwise, interviewees suggested dressing so as not to draw attention to one's apparel.

CANADIAN WOMEN DOING BUSINESS IN INDONESIA

Introduction

Indonesia is a resource-rich developing nation with a population of more than 180 million mostly concentrated on Java, and the rest spread over thousands of other islands. Indonesia has maintained impressive growth rates despite its fairly large foreign debt and the recent devaluation of its currency. It is receiving large investments in its manufacturing sector from Japan and other developed Asian countries. Formerly a restrictive environment for foreign business, it is still a market requiring persistence and patience. In 1991, Canada's two-way trade with Indonesia was $563 million, with Canada providing minerals, transportation equipment, and fertilizers; Canadians are also pursuing projects in transportation and resource extraction. Indonesian exports to Canada include semi-processed material such as rubber, plywood and other wood materials, outerwear, and coffee.

While the percentage of women in the paid workforce appears lower than in some other Asian countries, and few occupy senior management positions, our interviewees have met a number of educated women in the middle and upper ranks. Women do attain strong leadership positions, and many are going into business, especially family-owned businesses.

Common Perceptions About Indonesia

The following are widely held perceptions about doing business in Indonesia and our interviewees' reactions to them.

Perception: Women cannot operate effectively in a Muslim country.
Reality: Not only do interviewees doing business in Indonesia strongly disagree – they say Indonesians, whatever their beliefs, are unlikely to impose them on foreigners – but other women contacted during the course of this study had successful business dealings in such Muslim areas as Pakistan and the Persian Gulf. At the time of printing, Canada's Ambassador to Indonesia was a woman who has attained widespread respect.

From a Western perspective, Indonesia is almost a matriarchal society. Women seem to have a lot of control – not overt authority or power – but just a lot of control. Like Canada, they get things done. When I was working with a married couple, the husband always came to deal with me, but when I dealt with the wife, that's when things would get done. Juliana Markus

Perception: Indonesia is undeveloped and technologically unsophisticated.
Reality: Indonesia is active in energy extraction, aircraft manufacturing, atomic energy, and telecommunications.

Our clients have been in business for 15 years. Indonesia is the first developing country in the world to launch a satellite system. They're way ahead of many developed countries, many of which started later than them in this business. Indonesians have a lot to be proud of. Yvonne van der Ven

Perception: Indonesia is corrupt.
Reality: Unorthodox business practices exist worldwide, and any of these which interviewees found in Indonesia were accepted as a different system of doing business. None experienced real problems at her operating level. Names are not attributed for reasons of confidentiality.

I think there's a difference between money that you pay up front to get a contract – which I didn't encounter in my line of work, although I do hear from other people in bigger businesses that it occurs – and what I call facilitating payments, for example to get documents stamped. I see these as being like user fees, or tipping for service. There's an etiquette about it all; it's best not to do it yourself, for example.

It's a function of demand, partly. I had to tip somebody when hotel rooms were scarce one year.

I "bribed" a fellow once with the promise of a T-shirt. Is that corruption?

A. Business Practices

Many of the following remarks, related to the pace of business and etiquette, can be found in standard texts on doing business in Indonesia:

General

As in other Asian countries, business develops out of relationships, not vice-versa. The longer they have known you, the better you will be treated.

In North America, we probably put out more for a new client or a new customer in order to keep their business. In Indonesia, they provide a better quality of response after you know them for a long period of time. Juliana Markus

Communication is indirect.

They don't like to say no; they'd rather leave things by the wayside. And a few times when I might have done something wrong in the relationship, business-wise, they wouldn't call me on it. You'll be going merrily along, not realizing that you might have offended or done something that they don't like because a) they're afraid of losing you and b) they don't want to risk losing your business.

They don't realize that you don't lose business over a frank discussion. Susan Madden

Impolite behaviour, criticizing, showing anger, or making people lose face, however, will lose you business.

To them, the only polite thing to do with somebody that's expressing hostility is to pretend you don't see it. So if you get angry, and make a point about how to do it right and what their mistakes were, they won't listen to you. They'd be letting you lose face by acknowledging your anger. Juliana Markus

Develop the habit of double-checking and reconfirming everything yourself.

You have to go over every step of every procedure and double-check everything according to what you know is right. Check to the point of absolute ruthlessness, but do it with a great deal of grace, charm, kindness, and patience. Juliana Markus

It's a matter of bounding them gently. Susan Madden

Do not expect to be told when things are going wrong.

Twice I hired a manager there. The manager wouldn't tell me when things went wrong, and was embarrassed when somebody else had done something wrong. Juliana Markus

Do not leave problems for other people to solve.

We like diving into a problem – "Oh great, let's arm-wrestle this one to the ground!" That doesn't apply so much in Indonesia. There's a tendency for problems to get shoved to the side and just left. Juliana Markus

Indonesians do not feel the same time pressures we do. Learn to deal with "jam karet", or rubber time. And allow time for developing consensus with the other party.

Don't push something too much, too soon, you'll meet resistance. You have to let it go through the system before you'll see results. Consensus, that's their way. Yvonne van der Ven

Realize that you are only one person dealing in a culture of 180 million people.

Stop thinking that your way is the only way, and that if they don't do it your way, they're doing something wrong. Perhaps tolerance isn't the best thing in business because we should be intolerant when people don't meet our expectations. But on the other hand, tolerance kept me from developing cardiac arrest and high blood pressure. Juliana Markus

Seek expert advice about the island or cultural group in Indonesia that you are dealing with – subtle regional cultural differences may affect your business dealings. People from one part of this huge country – even government officials – can be unfamiliar with other regions. Do your own research.

Be pro-active, but not aggressive, in your business. Stress co-operation.

Indonesians are not very forthcoming in telling you exactly what they need and why. I do a lot of unsolicited business which develops out of discussions, or by discovering that someone has a problem. I sense who has the problem because problems often present business opportunities, and I offer to solve them, but not in a condescending way. In a way, I try to work as their representative inside my own Canadian operation. Yvonne van der Ven

Knowing the local language will not necessarily translate into better prices or delivery times for you, but will be appreciated and may help to strengthen the relationship.

Expatriates and local businesswomen can provide useful contacts, introductions, and intelligence.

My network in Indonesia mostly consisted of expatriate women. They understand the need for support and were wonderfully pragmatic. They generally offered tangible support, rather than soft recommendations. Juliana Markus

Suppliers and sub-manufacturers who can offer consistent quality may be hard to find. Your competitors will obviously not help you locate them. People in a different line of business from your own can offer you tips and be good sources of intelligence.

Negotiations and Contracts

Creating rapport with contacts should be seen as part of your negotiation process.

Canadians don't understand negotiations in the Asian way. I have a model for negotiations: the first stage is "contact initiation", which is when you meet the person. The second stage is "preparation and rapport-building", which is building the relationship and planning what it is you want to do, and how you'll go about it. Then you get to the third stage, "bargaining" – the point where there's a particular project for X dollars that you want. Quite often you've lost the negotiation even before you get to that stage because you didn't build the rapport. Lorna Wright

Be prepared for tough negotiations, and for price-sensitivity.

If your project is large – and especially when you are dealing with government bureaucracy – allow time for protracted negotiations. The Indonesian government has budget constraints, and a set of rules and approvals which you must meet.

The enforcement of government regulations can be lax, and Indonesians are often surprised by the rigours of our system.

Although it is assumed that both sides will profit from a deal, there is no "fair" price.

They will take you for every cent they can get. There's no malice, it's survival. I can quote the right price at the beginning just by sheer luck. But they will be totally sincere and completely convincing that it's absolutely impossible. Juliana Markus

While Lorna Wright advises being prepared to bargain downwards in Indonesia – it's a necessary element of negotiation – Juliana Markus did not always abide by this.

There's no negotiation as far as I'm concerned, I tell them the price. Actually, if they've managed to convince me during the months I've been away that their costs had doubled – and it's plausible – I might move. But otherwise I shake my head and smile, and just won't budge. I know some people there who haven't learned this, and they've been paying Western prices for years. Juliana Markus

Indonesians have a different concept of what a contract is.

Signing a contract is much more a signal that, "Okay, now we're serious about this and we'll get down to the real negotiations," and you can expect to re-negotiate through the life of the project. There's a feeling that it should be the spirit, rather than the letter, of the agreement which guides what you're doing, and if circumstances change, then the contract should be altered to reflect that. Lorna Wright

Although business can be done on just a handshake, fax the other party a note on what has been agreed to and get them to sign it.

Protect yourself by choosing contacts carefully. If a deal turns sour, walk away. Problems are not usually solved in the courts, and being a foreigner you are unlikely to get much sympathy. You could also tactfully explain your difficulties to the person who introduced you – news travels in the business community – but realize that this could "boomerang" on you.

Just go! The only way to really get a feel for it is to go there or get as close as you can to being there. It's very interesting, mysterious, culturally diverse. People are not that open there, and you have to go and fish out contacts and opportunities. You have to be there.

Yvonne van der Ven

In smaller businesses, up-front payments are not always needed.

Consultants may face unexpected requests for assistance – in implementation, for example – that might not occur in Canada.

Many international aid agencies are active in Indonesia. In order to bid competitively, companies may require assistance or advice from the Canadian International Development Agency or the Export Development Corporation.

Distribution

Indonesians may promise to comply with your spe
delivery date. Make your manufacturer specify a time i
– but mildly cross-examine to see if the date is "realistic"

Indonesians pay their bills. One of our interviewees reported having to prod her supplier to submit his invoices.

B. Preparation

Visiting Indonesia and talking to other business people are important.

I called External Affairs and asked them to set me up with contacts they had in Indonesia. There was a really good book called "Going International" about international business protocol. But mostly I talked to other business people – several through the World Trade Centre Association. Go to the horse's mouth, to the people who have done it. Nobody else really knows. Nice as government can be, it will still have a second-hand point of view. Juliana Markus

When there is no time to prepare, expect some difficulty, particularly in cultural areas.

There wasn't time. I just jumped into the business. Then I spent the first year trying to out-Asian the Asians, wondering why they were doing what they did. The Indonesian tourist office was very polite, but didn't offer a lot of hard information of the kind I needed. I didn't realize that the Canadian government provides a very good support network. And later, I started going to the CIBC (Canada-Indonesia Business Council) meetings just for networking. Susan Madden

While there are few problems in cities and larger towns, in smaller places, standards in food preparation may be different than in Canada.

There are a few keys to staying healthy if you're really off the beaten track. Make sure your food is really hot before eating it. I try to pick the safest thing going – I eat a lot of rice. I do eat fruit, but almost everything is peeled anyway. I've never been really ill, except on my one foray into the Sumatran jungle where the conditions in which our food was being prepared were suspect. Learn to drink water piping hot. And carry small packages of baby-wipes for wiping your hands and face – but not Handiwipes because they contain too much alcohol which really kills your skin. My Indonesian hosts were always saying, "Oh, could I have one of those?" Susan Madden

Jakarta's traffic problems are legendary, so do not make more than two appointments a day, plus a lunch meeting.

C. Using Contacts To Advantage
Finding the Right Contacts

Women we interviewed found contacts through:
customers' acquaintances. For manufacturers, shippers are useful as they know many people in manufacturing

- the Canadian, American, and European expatriate community, especially women doing business there
- the Board of Trade/Chamber of Commerce
- the Canadian Embassy
- Indonesian friends
- the Canada-Indonesia Business Council
- the Indonesian Embassy or Consulate in Canada
- the CanAsian Women's Network, maintained by the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada

As elsewhere in Asia, finding contacts is not difficult, but quality and reliability vary widely – a consideration for people in manufacturing or joint-ventures. The Canadian Embassy in Jakarta should be the first stop when looking for reliable agents/distributors. Even then, take the time to evaluate who you have been sent to.

An official sent me, in good faith, to someone who was supposed to help facilitate what I was doing. To make a long story short, he turned out to be a real problem. Juliana Markus

Introductions

Given the scarcity of telephone lines in Indonesia, the telephone is not widely used as an instrument of business, and calling "out of the blue" is inadvisable. Get an introduction from the Canadian Embassy, or a strategically located business contact who can call on your behalf or send a letter shortly before you arrive. Better still, have them introduce you in person.

Keeping in Touch with Contacts – Indonesian Style

In Indonesia, you must be liked to make progress in business.

If they don't like you, you're out the door, unless you have a lot of money and they want it. Susan Madden

If you are new to Indonesia, nurture good relationships – it may be your only way to beat the bigger, more experienced foreign competition.

How can you get precedence, particularly when you cannot offer them million-dollar orders? In Canada, you can be a stuffy, foreign, pompous So-and-so and be accepted. But in Indonesia, you have to put out for people to get them to put out for you. If they like you personally, they will try harder – much harder.

Juliana Markus

I've found the time spent up-front building relationships takes the place of having to pay money to get things. I'm not sure that this holds true for major contracts in the million-dollar range, but it's true for my size of operation. Lorna Wright

Perseverance over the long term pays.

Ask where you can find a resource for your business? T year they'll say, "I'm sorry, I really don't know." Ask them ond year and they might suggest somebody in the next city that they've heard about. Ask them the third year, after having paid all your bills and treated them well, and they will get in your car and drive you to their brother-in-law's place and he'll do a great job for you. Juliana Markus

Stay in touch by:

- face to face contact. Frequent trips are essential.
- phone calls. They can be costly or frustrating, however, if people – especially in government – are hard to reach.
- faxes, which can be informal to people you know well. Letters to busy people or those you do not know well frequently go unanswered.

Remain in Indonesia until problems are resolved. Faxes from Canada will not work as a means of problem solving.

Do not assume that no response implies a complicated message. It either means "no", or you'll have to initiate action.

When I didn't get an answer I'd think, "They're not answering because I didn't send them enough business," or, "my cheque hasn't arrived," or all these reasons. But every time it was simply sloppiness, or because they didn't want to say "no", or didn't know how to do something. Susan Madden

Cultural Keys

Indonesians dislike confrontation as an approach to problem-solving. Overly frank discussion, which may expose individuals responsible for errors, causes them to lose face and may result in their becoming evasive. If something is clearly the other person's fault, a better tactic might be to apologize for the error – blame yourself for not being sufficiently clear.

Accept all the responsibility for problems and all the blame – extravagantly. They know what you're really thinking, they can see it in your eyes. It really works. They will do anything for you then – overtime, work all night, etc. Juliana Markus

Ask a local friend for cultural guidance.

Ask, "What would somebody in Java do?", not, "What would you do?" because that's making them personally responsible.

Juliana Markus

Learn to appreciate Indonesians' direct sense of humour.

It's not done with any malice. I have a fax sitting right here – it says, "Please let me know if the shirt fits you. You know, after all, you are a bit fat." Susan Madden

Understanding the Hierarchies

Many of the women interviewed found it difficult to fy the real decision-makers in Indonesian organizations se, unlike in Canada, decisions are made at all levels.

A consensus society throws us a curve because there is never one decision-maker. These two guys are underneath the directors, and are considered the experts within the company, but they say they're not responsible for decisions. Yet they make recommendations which are taken very seriously. Below them are all kinds of people who may be very strong and influential but who may not have the title or status. They could be key in the process. So the moral is: be nice to everyone, take everyone seriously, and treat them with respect because you never know where they fit into the decision-making process.
Yvonne van der Ven

Identify decision-makers by talking to other contacts and by being observant.

It takes a lot of resourcefulness and quizzing people outside the company. I bring it up indirectly at social functions when I can appear not to be asking the question. Generally, you can tell by the behaviour of other people who the "king pin" is – who steps back when the fellow enters the room, the body language. Or when they're offering coffee, who, after you, gets the royal treatment generally is a decision-maker. But not always, sometimes it's a fatherly figure who may own a lot of the company but has no real power. Susan Madden

Keep in good standing with all levels of the hierarchy. They can be a valuable source of guidance.

I know you shouldn't try to go outside the hierarchy. But in Indonesia, if I'm having a problem with a guy and I've tried all the manoeuvres and still feel I'm getting nowhere, I will just pick up the phone and go to the next guy. I try to do it when the other guy's out of town or when I know he's busy. I do it innocently – "Sorry, So-and-so's not here, can you help me out?" That's why you have to give small gifts to the underlings, so you can find out other people's travel schedules. Susan Madden

Give gifts and souvenirs from Canada and do not forget support staff. Only senior staff usually go to receptions or have the opportunity to travel abroad, so help middle-level contacts get training in Canada or have them invited to important dinners or functions in Indonesia. Being thoughtful helps build relationships.

Be alert to clues that they need time to talk things over and build consensus.

"They'd say, 'We have to get some information from another city, or another guy'. And you'd think, 'Why isn't that guy here in the meeting?', or, 'I don't see why that city matters!' Now there's a manager trained in the United States, and he just looks at me and says, 'I see. I'll get back to you.' It means the same thing."

Susan Madden

D. Meetings

In terms of structure, frequency, and function, meetings are conducted differently in Indonesia than they are in Canada. If you want to keep close tabs on your business, expect to meet frequently. Be patient, and be ready to reschedule meetings as people do not always turn up.

Put people at ease and show respect by speaking to them in the third person, as Indonesians do.

When I came back to Canada I felt uneasy being called "Lorna" every second sentence, because I was used to being called either "Ibu" (mother) or "Mbak" (older sister). Lorna Wright

With small- to medium-sized companies, expect to meet the heads of the company. Unless you are in a large business, however, do not expect to meet senior government people who often wear more than one hat.

In Indonesia, I don't head for the minister, but talk to the director general. But in dealings with the private sector, I go right to the top. They'll generally see me – it's being a woman that makes the difference. I have never been refused a meeting, although it may take me a couple of tries. And then after that senior contact, I work my way down through the levels. Lorna Wright

The more senior and Westernized your contacts, the shorter and more succinct meetings may be. They can be held at any time and sometimes spill over into meals. Always bring your materials with you.

Sometimes you can be having a meeting or go into a negotiation without realizing it. Once I had a meeting with a director for training and development in Bandung, and I arrived expecting to meet him for an informal discussion. I found about 15 people in the meeting who wanted quite specific details. I was rather taken aback.
Yvonne van der Ven

Meetings are generally not very structured and people may drop in and out. Discussion may wander off the topic, and you may want to nudge it gently back onto course. Humour may intrude into discussions. Keep smiling.

They may be very jovial when you want to be serious. You try to get an answer, but just get the run-around. They can be laughing and having a great time, but you get frustrated because things aren't going the way you want. You have to learn to laugh with them, show you think this is fun, too. Yvonne van der Ven

Do not expect decisions to be made at meetings, especially the first one. Many more meetings may be needed.

They're warm and gracious and if you push them they'll say, "Of course, fine!" They can't say no. But you'll find nothing happening. So it's better to postpone, better to take time to develop the relationship. Juliana Markus

Generally, it takes two or three days to do what one phone call would do in Canada. And three to five meetings, depending on the subject matter. The more money and risk on their part, the longer it takes. Susan Madden

Be warm and friendly and treat contacts as equals or superiors. Indonesians are proud of their country's accomplishments since independence from colonial rule.

They have certain underlying feelings. You spend more on a hotel room than they spend on their family in a month. So let go of feelings of superiority or condescension and behave with humility. Juliana Markus

Listen. Sometimes we tend to talk too much and we don't listen to what they're saying; we don't ask enough questions. Or we ask it and then answer it ourselves. Yvonne van der Ven

Most Indonesians that you will deal with speak English well. If they do not, hire an interpreter – who is usually female and a good source of contacts. Expect Indonesian contacts to discuss points for minutes at a time among themselves in their own language. Indonesians work through consensus so do not expect too much from individual meetings.

Don't take meetings too seriously, in the sense of feeling disappointed if you don't achieve your initial objective or if things don't go the way you wanted them to go. Yvonne van der Ven

E. Social Practices

Indonesians take great care looking after you. You may be picked up at the airport and escorted to your hotel. They may ask what you want to do on weekends and arrange side trips for you. Accept this graciously; they are not implying that you cannot look after yourself. Citing fatigue as an excuse to decline, however, is acceptable. Socializing is an important part of getting to know contacts better, and business may be discussed anywhere.

You may be invited home by Indonesian colleagues in the private sector but with westernized government officials expect to find a sharp dividing line between private and public roles.

My government contacts are very family-oriented, and uncomfortable talking about their private lives. They haven't invited me to their homes; they draw the line there. It's okay to go for a business dinner or lunch, but it's very hard to become friends. I have good relationships, but it's strictly business. Yvonne van der Ven

Be cautious giving gifts to people in government.

We're a clean company and we don't give under-the-table gifts. But gifts are a marketing tool, so I always bring them. Ma[illegible] they're given at the end of a meeting and don't make a big de[illegible] And remember, they're not supposed to accept any personal gifts whatsoever. So make it something they can put on their wall – for the office. Yvonne van der Ven

If offered an alcoholic drink, decline politely.

Although some Muslims drink, it is generally not accepted. And thinking that, "Oh well, I'm with a Christian crowd", may run the risk that they are indeed such serious Christians that they also find drinking offensive. Lay off alcohol. Susan Madden

Your foreign looks and clothes – even if you are ethnically Asian – may elicit curiosity and unusual questions.

The women love personal questions; not the decision-makers, but the junior office workers. They want to know about my marriage, if I'm happy, and how I feel about my children. They love to touch my children. I let them; it doesn't bother me, but I can see where it might bother other North Americans. Susan Madden

Use humour to keep awkward situations under control.

A baggage handler wanted to try on my hat but I was sure he had head lice! You want to treat people as human beings, so you just have to find diplomatic and cheerful ways of handling it – the trick is to revert to humour, to laugh at it. Susan Madden

Use only your right hand to pass people things as using the left hand is offensive to Muslims. Do not beckon with an upward curl of your finger; curl your hand downwards using all the fingers.

At parties, men and women often sit separately. You want to be friendly to women, but you also want to appear professional and comfortable with male company. So move back and forth, and be friendly to all.

As Your Contacts Get Warmer

Outside of government circles, you may be invited to lunches, dinners, or to people's houses to stay.

It was the same with everybody. "Come stay with me, take my car, take my driver. It's yours. Let me give you everything." Juliana Markus

If invited to someone's home, take candies or chocolates and small souvenirs for the children and adults. Expect to be given small gifts, too.

Do not initiate shows of physical affection. A handshake is best. To break the ice or build relationships, learn some Indonesian songs, show an interest in the culture and customs of the different islands your acquaintances are from, and enquire about their families. Being willing to use your right [illegible] to eat is appreciated, but only in a home setting as they [illegible] of doing this in public.

Indonesians sit close together and often hold hands with the same sex to show friendship. Although you may hold hands with Indonesian female friends, do not do so with men.

Men didn't touch me. I'm single. And when they did, you always suspected something. It's not done. Juliana Markus

As the relationship grows, Indonesian friends may make large requests of you – things that Canadians you have known for the same length of time would not. They are not taking advantage of you, but rather showing friendship, which implies a heavier obligation than friendships in Canada.

Dress

Indonesia can be very hot.

I think it's important for a woman, no matter how busy, to arrive a day early to acclimatize herself. I never perspire in Canada, but in the tropics I find the perspiration runs down my face, my face cream melts, and my eyes start burning. It's very irritating when you're in your first meeting and you're trying to be "all together."
Susan Madden

Dress professionally and conservatively with skirts over the knee and avoid exposing a lot of skin. Culottes are regarded as beach wear. Indonesians are flattered when you wear the local batik.

Although it may delight your hosts, interviewees recommended against wearing the formal kain/kebaya outfits. The tight-fitting, long-sleeved jackets are hot, and sarongs suit only the most petite women.

CANADIAN WOMEN DOING BUSINESS IN TAIWAN

Introduction

Taiwan's foreign exchange reserves now surpass Japan's, under-scoring Canada's need to develop more active trade links with this island of 20 million people. Taiwanese companies are investing heavily elsewhere in Asia – particularly China, where wages are low – and occasionally in large resource-related projects in the developed countries. Historically, Canada has received less than its share of Taiwanese investment, although we now welcome growing numbers of tourists and immigrants. We also import a wide variety of manufactured goods from Taiwan, and export mostly raw materials and foodstuffs. Canada-Taiwan two-way trade in 1991 was $3.3 billion. Despite the existence of tariff-related irritants, opportunities for Canadian business exist in a number of consumer product and infrastructure areas.

As they are in Canada, women in Taiwan are active in the workforce, in commerce, and in the professions, but underrepresented in senior business and in politics. As one interviewee noted, "In Taiwan, the men spend their time making money, and the women decide where to spend it."

Common Perceptions About Taiwan

Here are interviewees' reactions to some common perceptions about Taiwan.

Perception: The Taiwanese are too tied up doing business with the United States to notice Canadians.

They actually tell me they prefer doing business with Canadians because we're warmer and more personable. They also think they won't be "taken" by a Canadian. Jean Yu

Perception: Taiwan is polluted and is not a nice place to visit.

So many visitors stick to the two big cities and don't see the countryside – the mountains, tea plantations, and fish farms. It's beautiful. Eunice Ludlow

If you're a conservative person, you're going to go there and complain when people bump into you, and then fly out, holding your nose. Dorothea Oakley

Perception: The Taiwanese will steal your product or technology.
Reality: This is changing rapidly, as Taiwan's low-cost manufacturing moves offshore and higher value-added manufacturing takes over; it has also submitted an application to join the GATT.

Perception: Women are not accepted in business in Taiwan.

There are thousands of women in business there. Eunice L

Foreign business women are certainly accepted. Local women have a much more difficult time being accepted than we do. A woman going into Taiwan will do better than a man. We're more flexible, and content to build business a step at a time – which is what the Taiwanese like. Dorothea Oakley

A. Business Practices

While most of the following remarks are found in standard texts on doing business in Taiwan, interviewees also stressed them.

General

Taiwanese business is dominated by family-owned firms, and income distribution throughout society is fairly even. Much business is done on the basis of personal contacts from family, old schoolmates, and friends. If you are disliked, money alone will not buy business.

Work is frequently subcontracted.

In factories, nothing is done all under one roof. Every family has its own corporation, doing bits and pieces, and the wealthiest person is the manufacturer, who accumulates all the parts. Dorothea Oakley

Many people who have newly-made fortunes on the stock market are trying to get into business. Often they do not know the ropes, particularly regarding government regulations. Be wary.

In many areas little English is spoken, so knowing some Mandarin may help. Some of our interviewees, however, did not find Chinese-language skills essential unless one plans to live in Taiwan.

Travel abroad has increased in recent years, but our interviewees did not find the Taiwanese as cosmopolitan as Hong Kong businesspeople, for example.

Asian Canadians have no advantage in bargaining, as they can be recognized as North Americans by their clothes and hair styles.

Taiwanese culture stresses indirectness and a non-confrontational approach; you will need patience, persistence, and the ability to quickly read between the lines.

Business in Taiwan is extremely competitive, so know your business and prices well to gain respect.

Allocate the resources, time, and stamina for frequent travel, or consider maintaining a permanent presence there.

You can't go twice a year and hope they'll remember you. Someone else always arrives as you leave, and people are fickle.
Eunice Ludlow

Use your intuition.

If I feel that we don't have the same chemistry, I find someone else that I can do business with easier. Eunice Ludlow

In Taiwan, you have to throw away the rule book and do business with your feelings. Dorothea Oakley

Quality from anywhere is welcome. The Taiwanese are increasingly conscious of the world market.

Some of their quality problems before were because North Americans over-stressed low prices and didn't demand quality, and the Taiwanese didn't have role models, e.g. for beauty in design in modern furniture. But they are very teachable. So I am bringing to them from Europe something that they and North Americans don't spend money on today – design. Dorothea Oakley

New technology is welcome. The Taiwanese can no longer afford to make labour-intensive products, and are relocating factories to China and elsewhere. They are also one of the fastest nations in the world to absorb new technology to advantage.

They're very keen on technology, partially because many of their leading families are well connected to Japan – or may even be part Japanese. Many people forget that Japan ruled Taiwan for 50 years. Eunice Ludlow

The Taiwanese are eager to expose their products to the West, and will regard you as a window to North America. They will be eager to help you and will want you to help them. Brokers or middlemen are less welcome in Taiwan than those who are knowledgeable about manufacturing, can transfer technology, or can assure them a market. They may be able to finance the equipment and plants required, on a cash basis.

Business can be initiated by fax, but if problems arise they must be solved in Taiwan.

If you provide professional services, do not be offended if the Taiwanese appear cautious, or try to find out if the regulations you cite are bona fide. They may have known Taiwanese professionals who were overly flexible with the rules.

Negotiations and Contracts

No matter what else is talked about, price and the bottom line are paramount.

They are tough. In furniture manufacturing they will talk price screw by screw. Dorothea Oakley

The Taiwanese prefer large-volume sales, but now that their wage competitiveness has slipped, they may take smaller orders.

If the other side is unfamiliar with your area of bu they will move at a snail's pace. But once their minds are up, they will proceed with lightning speed.

When negotiations are long and drawn out, it's because they do not understand and want to pick your brains. If they really want business, they'll overwhelm you. Jean Yu

The Taiwanese are some of the world's best tire-kickers.

Sometimes they give the impression of being completely enthusiastic, but won't want to do it at all. They've probably made up their minds pretty early on, but you'll never know until the last moment. They'll find out the maximum about an opportunity, then not bite. So be prepared to be patient. Bringing them in is an art, especially if it's something esoteric. Eunice Ludlow

Stress dollar figures, the feasibility of a project, and its future growth prospects.

They like to have things with a lifespan, not just six months. Show where the expansion will be. Eunice Ludlow

Some people believe that one can force, in certain circumstances, the normally slow pace of Taiwanese business.

I'm very pleasant, I smile. But if I have to catch a plane, we'd better do the deal. I let them know I'm leaving in two hours – "Gentlemen, be aware...". Harma Hill

However, not rushing negotiations can save money in the long run.

If you demand to get your business over with too quickly, you won't get the best price. Work around. Negotiate. Dorothea Oakley

For those with a flawless knowledge of the market and a shortage of time, the following tactics might work on occasion.

I obtain prices world-wide before I go. And I tell them what those prices are. If they still say no, I tell my associates, "Thank him for his hospitality." I walk towards the door. Most of the time they'll call me back and give me what I want. Also, they love to delay until the last minute, and sign the contract in the taxi. So I tell them I'm leaving. They take me to the airport and we sign in the car. They do not know I have a taxi waiting at the airport to take me back to my hotel. Harma Hill

Interviewees recommended having three or four alternate prices to successfully bargain downwards.

There's no fair price, only the cheapest price. Everyone likes to think he's landed a deal. Jean Yu

People who provide professional services must learn to haggle over prices and fees like any other businessperson.

I used to think, "How can I make any money?" They'll push nd push you, that's why people think Asian clients are more dling. But they're just entrepreneurial. Anchor yourself and hese are my costs and I can't lose money." Do not subsidize
Jean Yu

Never lose your temper, although it is acceptable to be frank, but polite, about the realities of your business.

I smile and say, "So tell me why I should do business with you, when your prices are higher than the competition." Harma Hill

I smile and say, "You know, I can't do this for free. This is a business." Jean Yu

The Taiwanese are not very legalistic by nature, and are unlikely to go to court unless large sums of money are involved.

With people they know and trust they'll operate on a handshake, but with new people they want everything signed.
Eunice Ludlow

They need a purchase order, but it isn't as firm in their minds as in yours. I never see them solve a contractual problem in the courts. If someone isn't able to do what they say, they won't be in business.
Dorothea Oakley

Unless it involves a huge sum of money, it seems to be less painful to say, "I made the wrong friend," than to go into litigation. Jean Yu

Be realistic about your expectations and what you can offer. And proceed slowly; respect grows fastest with a gradual growth in business.

Ultimatums and confrontation will stifle business prospects. Contacts are reassured by reasonable and co-operative partners.

Say things like, "All right, we have 150 parts to put together into a product. So we know we'll have problems. But we're here to set rules for solving problems when they come, not to wait for disaster and then go crazy." Dorothea Oakley

The Chinese phrase used most often is "step by step". They don't want to do $1 million today and $2 million six months down the road. They'll be suspicious, and so would I. That's why a woman's style works very well in Taiwan. She'll be content to build her business slowly. Men always go for the big deal, but money doesn't stick to your fingers that way.

Dorothea Oakley

Distribution

Delivery times are erratic, but Taiwan is improving. Specify a fixed time frame if it is urgent. Otherwise, allow for their inability to deliver on time, or let them specify a time and hold them to it.

In the past they believed that if they gave me an optimistic delivery date, and didn't deliver on time, they'd get away with it because of the cheap labour they offer. That doesn't work any longer, because – as I tell them – there are other countries which can offer cheaper labour, better quality, and delivery on time. Harma Hill

For them, if something's two weeks late, it's on time.
Dorothea O[illegible]

If you provide professional services and deal with clients unfamiliar with the use of these, you may encounter problems with payments of your normal fees.

I do not produce something they can take home and look at. They just come in with some painful problem, and it's fixed, and they think, "That was simple. Why do I have to pay her so much?" So I ask for up-front retainers now. Jean Yu

B. Preparation

Visits and talking to other businesspeople are the preferred ways of learning about Taiwan, particularly because material was scarce until recently. Today the Canadian Trade Office in Taipei and the Far East Trade Service in Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal offer useful background information. The Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada has also published a Taiwan business primer. Our interviewees briefed themselves in various ways.

Through lectures she gave on importing and exporting in Canada, Harma Hill met a number of Taiwanese people and learned about the business culture from them. Otherwise, she simply "dove in".

Some have the advantage of clients or Taiwanese family contacts before they leave.

My father was an airline pilot, then a businessman in Taiwan. My sister is a real estate agent, and I got my initial clients through her. But then I used my clients as a source of information – and they were actually the best. Jean Yu

Others go to Taiwan without the advantage of contacts.

The only people I knew of working there were missionaries. And I didn't know of any relevant reading material. Anyway, the best approach is to prepare yourself mentally – a healthy attitude. Do not learn Chinese beforehand. Learn it in Taiwan, it's a great place to learn Chinese. And go there thinking long-term – after a year your feet are wet, the second year you'll be useful, and the third year you'll earn your keep. Dorothea Oakley

Knowing a little about Taiwan's culture, as well as talking to people who have done business there, is highly recommended.

Reading history is important. It is a point of communication, people know their ancestors. You can talk to them about their idols, or their despised figures. It also gives you a grip on things, everything is related. I'd note to other women that some of the food goes

beyond the Chinese cooking we know and stretched even my elastic abilities beyond endurance. Also, they drink vast quantities of brandy. Knowing that, I now bring liquor as a gift. Eunice Ludlow

C. Using Contacts To Advantage

To do business, you must make friends. A this-is-strictly-business attitude does not work; the Taiwanese want something closer.

In the beginning I had a problem with that – my Canadian upbringing stressed business-is-business and friendship-is-friendship! But they like making me a friend, because then I'll be more loyal to their interests. It's a grassroots way of developing business. It goes from family to friends to strangers and, in turn, strangers and trusted employees become family. Jean Yu

When friendship is not involved, they're very polite, very attentive – and totally inactive in terms of doing business with you. Eunice Ludlow

Finding the Right Contacts

Place importance on identifying and checking out the right contacts – people who have experience and high quality operations. The Canadian Trade Office in Taipei can assist. One good contact can introduce you to many others.

You really only need one Chinese friend; the rest is networking. Dorothea Oakley

I got four introductions from people I'd been communicating with previously but had never met. This grew to a huge number. Eunice Ludlow

Membership in the Canada-Taiwan Business Association in Canada can provide useful contacts and information, as can Canadian businesspeople with friends in Taiwan. Trade shows in either Taiwan or North America can provide initial introductions before you establish contacts directly with Taiwanese companies. Contacts in the Taiwanese government who are knowledgeable of your sector or industry can also be an effective starting point. And associates in other countries with family links to Taiwan are useful.

In Taiwan, networking with women can be useful; many are active in business, or have wealthy family connections.

About 50 percent of my business transactions involve women, either singly or with their husbands. Jean Yu

When approaching companies, try to deal with the C

And with factories, get the owner. He's the only one w give you a price; you're wasting your time otherwise. And o first meeting with a factory, you'll very seldom be meeting with the owner, so do not expect to talk price. Dorothea Oakley

When seeking investment, wait for trust to build first.

We had been talking for a month when he called one night and said, "Do not have dinner." He took us to a temple to meet his Taoist teacher. There was a little ceremony, and we kowtowed and had incense spread over us, and the priest made us a wonderful vegetarian dinner. Only then did my contact take us to see his investor the next day. It was as if he had brought us into his family with that ceremony. So believe me, you just do not give out the name of that investor to anyone. It's a situation of really earning trust. Hannah Fisher

Introductions

Without an introduction from someone important to your potential contact, you will only gain access to people in the lower echelons. That first introduction, however, does not mean that the job is over.

Introductions from trusted, long-time business associates carry the most weight.

Most helpful is what they perceive as the esteem in which you are held by your older acquaintances. Eunice Ludlow

Good contacts do not always come free.

I would vet someone very carefully. I have my own credibility to worry about. And do not think you get your contacts for nothing – I'm prepared to pay the price; that's how I got there. Harma Hill

Keep business cards plain. Some Taiwanese avoid passing out cards.

Buyers may approach factories without introductions, although they are helpful. Factories may lack English-speaking people.

The top guy, even if he's way up there, will be very courteous and humble because the introduction was made by his good friend. And non-Asians can get blinded by this. Remember; the royal treatment is part of the business culture – he's doing it for his friend, not for you.

Jean Yu

Keeping in Touch with Contacts – Taiwanese Style

All over Asia, thought and effort must be expended to keep in touch with contacts. Taiwan is no exception.

You have to very consciously stay in contact because it's a little out of sight, out of mind. Send them things of interest, especially something in their line. I do not send them major gifts because I'll get something just as big back – I just send little things. Try to remember the names of their children and their birthdays. Send cards on special days – like October 10, the Double Tenth National Day, and Chinese New Year – you have to remember when that is. Christmas cards are greetings but mean nothing to them. Make sure they know thinking about them. It takes a lot of jotting things down, my s full of notations, but it's very important. Eunice Ludlow

Although personal visits are ideal, faxes and phone calls are also welcome – regularity and persistence always helps.

I try and visit as much as possible. My contacts are very mobile, too. Sometimes we might meet in the Philippines or Malaysia. Eunice Ludlow

Keep in touch with the key people. Loyalty is noticed.

If you aren't a loyal buyer, they'll find some way to mess you up. Dorothea Oakley

Offer hospitality when they visit.

Their hospitality is breathtaking. It's embarrassing. Eunice Ludlow

Many Taiwanese are interested in immigrating to or investing in Canada, but do not understand our system. Coach them, and keep your eyes open for opportunities for them here.

The help you offer good contacts will likely be reciprocated.

When I went on my own and moved my business into my home, I seemed more like one of them. And they thought, "Oh, now we have to look after her!" All these factories who'd been dependent on me to smooth over all their problems decided to be responsible for my success! Dorothea Oakley

The indirect communications puzzled even Taiwan-born Jean Yu. So she fought back – indirectly.

I started asking indirect questions of them. "I do not understand why a lot of clients of mine from Taiwan will do this," not even relating it to them. They'd tell me why. It's a roundabout way of getting at the information. Jean Yu

Keep a close eye on all aspects of the business as quality can fluctuate. Watching the home front is important, too – Canadian colleagues may not understand the need for so much time in developing contacts.

My colleagues thought you can go out with an order book, put up a notice that you've arrived, and that people will be lined up 24 hours a day. Eunice Ludlow

Understanding the Hierarchies

Taiwanese hierarchies are much less strict than those in Japan, but they do exist in families and large companies. Research the company hierarchies, and ask friends about the family ones. They have patterns.

For example, the eldest son will pretend he has the final say but it's really the dad. Dorothea Oakley

Canadians of Chinese ethnic origin should take special care to observe the hierarchies. While foreigners, gen[illegible] are not expected to be completely conversant in Taiw[illegible] ways, it is wise to show respect toward senior-level peop[illegible]

Maybe they do not expect it of you, but they do of me. Jean Yu

A foreigner's ability to work within the hierarchy makes everyone more comfortable. If you must bypass someone, interviewees suggest the following:

Do not go to the father. Go sideways. You're a foreigner and you have no rights. Find a classmate of his or someone who's lent him money to tell him to shape up. You find that person just by spending time with the Chinese. Dorothea Oakley

Ask advice of someone who understands the hierarchy of the company. He may say, "Mr. Kwan's the guard dog, you can't go around him." Or he may say he's just a peon. In that case, ask your guy on the side to set up an appointment for you. Mr. Kwan may be angry, but he may not blame you. He'll blame the third party involved. Jean Yu

I would go around him. I would speak to his superior, even if I didn't know him, and nicely say there was a roadblock. And then I'd tell the person himself, "By the way, I'm anxious that this go ahead and so I've spoken to Mr. X". But I wouldn't try that in Japan. Eunice Ludlow

People do not advertise how important they are, so research them before you discount them.

Find out all you can about a person's social status before you go in. If you're unsure, treat him as if he's above you or at least equal. Always be respectful. Their titles may differ from ours, but anyone can have "manipulative power". And never judge by the way they dress! Business dress isn't the norm there. Many successful people don't wear a suit. Jean Yu

D. Meetings

Expect your side to be outnumbered in meetings. Although some people feel more comfortable doing so, it is unnecessary to bring "extra" colleagues along.

Keep eye contact as you offer your hand for a handshake.

Alternately, make a slight bow with hands on the front of your thighs.

Offer your business card with two hands.

You will usually be shown where to sit.

I sit very comfortably, cross my hands on the table, smile and wait. Harma Hill

Be ready for a lot of cigarette smoking – a Taiwan-wide phenomenon.

You will be offered tea and asked about your trip. An exchange of pleasantries will follow. Do not expect the Taiwanese to raise business immediately, particularly in a first [illegible]ng.

[illegible] business gets raised at all during a first meeting, we may just [illegible]round it like one of those little water beetles – zip! and that's it.

I usually find business gets raised during the second meeting, or after lunch when we've had time to size each other up. Eunice Ludlow

Once you are into a business relationship, you can propose, after the pleasantries, an agenda for the meeting. Ask if this is acceptable. Meetings may be interrupted by dinner or lunch; if so, drop business talk unless your Taiwanese colleagues raise it. As the meeting progresses, people may be brought in to meet you.

An accountant and a lawyer often appear. The accountant – the snake in the grass – is sizing you up, seeing if you are a dreamer or a realist. He'll win brownie points if he averts a disaster or makes his guy a fortune. I do not direct a lot of attention at him but I'm very aware of him. The lawyer may arrive later, sometimes just for lunch. But... he has taken a good look. Eunice Ludlow

Several people on the other side may talk during meetings, but they will defer when the senior person speaks.

Pleasantness is important at meetings, even when you are delivering a tough message.

In business meetings you need a humorous style – decorum with a smile. Be gracious and quietly self-confident, aware of what's going on with everyone even though you can't understand what's being said. And show an ability to laugh at yourself. Eunice Ludlow

Not all Taiwanese are quiet.

If someone is aggressive, I'll be more animated. But if he's a "smiling tiger", I'll be one, too. You have to be observant and adjust. Jean Yu

When people are silent and nodding – even smiling – it doesn't mean they're agreeing. They're saying, "I hear you." They'll also nod and smile their way through your explanations. Learn to ask questions and see if they can repeat what you've said, but don't come across as a teacher or examiner. For example, you can ask, "Did I explain this clearly?", or "Is there anything I didn't explain clearly that you want me to go over?" You can also laugh and say, "So you understood absolutely EVERYTHING I said, right?" and make a joke of it. Then they'll say, "well..."

Jean Yu

If you are a buyer, make your requirements extremely clear down to the last detail – to both managers or factory workers. Be tough but pleasant.

E. Social Practices

Business is commonly discussed at social functions, but wait for others to raise it.

As family-run businesses are prevalent in Taiwan, some interviewees felt that people are more comfortable if you show that family is important to you, too. Others disagreed.

When I tell them that home and family are important to me, they're absolutely delighted. Harma Hill

This is sometimes overdone. Factory owners do not talk family. It's an unessential part of doing business. Dorothea C

I do not stress it greatly. If someone asks, I'll certainly talk about my family. As they get to know you, they always are quite interested to know that you're operating within a family unit – and that we also have cliques in Canada. In Taipei, people live completely inside their own circle and aren't much interested in others. Eunice Ludlow

Single businesswomen planning to work in Taiwan may find business exhilarating, but social life dull.

Young foreign men are all mesmerized by the Chinese women, and the Chinese men do not usually go after Canadian women, so there's a real factor to be dealt with in terms of dates and socializing. Remember, your emotional health matters. Dorothea Oakley

A sense of humour is an asset in Taiwan.

They laugh at themselves and at you. Every night is Saturday Night Live. The country is absurd. Dorothea Oakley

They like to talk about the latest bop on the nose in the Legislature. Eunice Ludlow

Expect the Taiwanese to request you to do a lot of small things unrelated to your business. Compared to Canada, the dividing line between business friends and non-business friends is blurred. Work and play also are not as sharply delineated as they are in Canada.

Life is a pleasure, but working is a pleasure, too. They do not program leisure in – so you sometimes mistake it for their not having any fun or good times, as we understand it. But for them, to have a successful week at the factory is like a great golf score to us. Dorothea Oakley

Although talking about politics does not present problems, avoid referring to Taiwan as an independent country or nation as, technically at least, it remains a province of China. Ask questions rather than making unsolicited comments.

I would talk generally about politics but not get specific – it's too heated. I would still avoid the Kuomintang, although it is losing power. Talk about their amazing economic development. They're proud of it. Eunice Ludlow

Conversational ice-breakers can include anything non-critical of Taiwan. People commonly ask if people have children, what their ages are, etc.

ek advice before initiating gift-giving. While appropri- certain occasions, it is sometimes unnecessary and the nt may feel obliged to reciprocate.

He said, "Oh, good, you didn't bring me anything. It's a pain to have to get you something." Dorothea Oakley

The Types of Social Functions

Lunches, dinners, or big banquets are common.

Although rare, invitations to a so-called businessman's club, which may feature hostesses from various countries, may occur. Go if you are curious but expect to feel uncomfortable. The hostesses may be unused to serving businesswomen, and giggle, ask personal questions, or make awkward attempts at behaviour better suited with male clients. Allusions to the sex trade may surface. Where hostesses normally charge for dances, expect resentment at your taking male partners "away" from them. Interviewees advised treating it all as a piece of theatre, or else suggesting to hosts some other venue for socializing.

I don't go to clubs, I go to spas with female clients or with wives of clients for a facial, hairdo, and massage – the female equivalent of male clubs. They establish intimacy. When women take you to spas, it means that they really want to be your friends. Jean Yu

As Your Contacts Get Warmer

Friendship means responsibility. Being made responsible also means friendship.

You'll know you've gotten there when they start asking for personal favours, and which school their children can go to in Canada. Jean Yu

Interviewees said that being invited to someone's home can mean: simple friendship; a friendship designed to make you to feel indebted to them; wanting to show you off to friends; or wanting to introduce you to their friends for business purposes.

Male Taiwanese often offer to pay the tab.

I sometimes joke to my partners: "Hire more women. Everything will be paid for. It's free." Jean Yu

Wealthy people in Taiwan are often victims of crime. Your contacts will avoid advertising their wealth; you should avoid it too.

Dress

Our interviewees suggest conservative business suits in any colour, de-emphasizing flashiness except perhaps in evening wear (where silks and jewellery are often worn by local businesswomen), neatness, and low-heeled shoes.

CANADIAN WOMEN DOING BUSINESS IN THAILAND

Introduction

Thailand, as Asia's newest "little tiger", has experienced impressively high levels of economic growth during the last decade; in 1990 its real gross domestic product rose ten percent, and in 1991 approached eight percent. Faced with high domestic costs, Japanese and other Asian firms have moved offshore to invest heavily in Thailand's low-wage automotive and electronics assembly plants. Although two-way trade with Thailand was $853 million in 1991, Canada has been slow to invest and enter into joint ventures there. Canadian companies are pursuing opportunities in agriculture, especially in dairy and livestock, as well as projects in oil, gas, power generation, and mineral extraction. Thai exports to Canada include automobiles, food, and textiles; these and other manufactured goods are expected to grow in future.

Like many countries, Thailand has mixed cultural attitudes towards women. Images of airline hostesses compete with the more disturbing ones of poverty and prostitution. Many Canadians are unaware, however, that Thailand's rapid modernization has created a class of well-educated, dynamic women who have a reputation for entrepreneurship, often running their own small- to medium-sized businesses. Thai women also commonly reach senior levels in government and private industry.

Common Perceptions About Thailand

The following are some of the prevailing impressions that people have about doing business in Thailand, and our interviewees' reactions to them:

Perception: Thai women are not liberated.

When I first visited their utility, they had women in more senior positions than we had in Ontario Hydro. Claire Seddon

Perception: Thais are not straightforward.
Reality: Because of Thai cultural values, they tend to communicate less directly than Canadians in business situations. You have to learn to read the signals.

"Yes" doesn't always mean yes. They don't believe in confrontation. You have to confirm a sense of agreement on things. Intuitively you develop a sense of knowing – they may say "yes", but there's this little blankness in their eyes. Claire Seddon

Perception: Thai people are gentle.

They are lovely people, and when I'm there I smile all th... But you don't know "tough" until you deal with them on busi...
Claire S...

Perception: Thailand is corrupt.
Reality: In large, highly competitive sectors, unorthodox business practices exist worldwide. As in the previous chapter on Indonesia, our interviewees were not disturbed by the system of "user fees" they found in Thailand.

A. Business Practices

Most of the following remarks can be found in standard texts on doing business in Thailand and were echoed by the women we talked to.

General

Keys to doing business are the ability to listen, and being co-operative and adaptable.

I found out afterwards that the reason why I got the project and that country X lost it was because I said, "Let's work together to try to accomplish what you've set out to do. I'm not going to come in and tell you to do it the Canadian way, because we have differences. But we can take the basics from Canada and adapt and change them to work in Thailand. We have to do it the best way for Thailand." Valerie Shore Cron

Do business with a smile.

You've got to enjoy what you're doing, and you've got to project that enjoyment. Lorna Wright

"Valerie, learn how to smile!" my agent would say after a meeting. "Even when you're serious, make it fun!" And I'd say, "But I did! I went in with a big smile and I left with a big smile." "But keep smiling!" he'd say. And during a meeting he'd sit there, and when my smile wore off, he'd give me a nudge. Valerie Shore Cron

Grasp the Thai concept of hospitality which pervades its culture and enhances business dealings.

If you are their guest, they won't let you out of their sight. They're responsible for you day and night, and do EVERYTHING to make you comfortable and happy. They expect to be treated this way, too. When hosting missions, I did everything I could for them. They could call me at 5 a.m. if their suitcase broke – ask me anything. So they felt very comfortable about the way my company looked after them. They used to complain that in other countries they wouldn't be treated right. Claire Seddon

...earn a few words of Thai.

To be able to carry on a casual conversation, to say "hello" and "how are you", matters. It sets the atmosphere and helps in terms of establishing a relationship. Claire Seddon

Thailand has many co-operatives in the agri-business sector. However, individual co-op members may not always want to approach things "collectively."

Individual members don't like working through agents, they want to deal directly. Whereas in other countries if farmers X, Y, and Z want more, you tell them that "We're putting orders together, and this is how you can save money." In Thailand, even farmers in a collective prefer to deal one-on-one. It's a very different approach. Valerie Shore Cron

If you are a family-owned Canadian company with a long history, you will relate well to the Thais, as family businesses abound.

Some Thais dislike discussing business over dinner; others do. Take your cues from Thai colleagues.

Like most Asians, Thais respect age.

As I've aged, and as my appearance has caught up with my actual age, I haven't had to work as hard at being taken seriously. Lorna Wright

Politely enquire if you are in the price ballpark.

You can waste a lot of time. I must have made five or six visits before I found out. He was subtle. We had touched on price, but I didn't read him right – didn't reconfirm. His interest was there, so I just wanted to believe. Valerie Shore Cron

Do not assume that keen interest means a deal.

"If you saw that amount of interest in a Western customer, you'd think, 'I've got to get in here!' But what would qualify someone as a customer in the West doesn't necessarily qualify Thais."

Valerie Shore Cron

Thailand's economy is booming, and many countries are jockeying for position there. Know who your competition is.

The problem is here, really. We're too provincial. We're behind. Too many companies aren't looking at the longer term, and won't really commit themselves to this market. Government and agencies such as the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada should be giving us less stuff on the opportunities, and more on the threats and the competition. Geraldine Pelletier

The competition, however, has not always treated the Thais fairly.

Someone I knew was talking to some people in country X and they were laughing about how they sent their poorest products to Thailand instead of disposing of them. The Thais have put out a fair amount of money and lost on this, and now they're very edgy. So I spend a tremendous amount of time, without slamming c[illegible] X, explaining the differences. Valerie Shore Cron

Canada has a good reputation in Thailand in some business sectors.

My first question to a Thai contact was, "Why would your company even consider us when country X is closer and has every product that we have, and in such quantities?" He started talking about how they like and dislike certain cultures. You know, Canada has an excellent reputation abroad. Valerie Shore Cron

Government objectives for the domestic market can have an impact on your business.

The political dynamics are important. You should position yourself with an eye to these. In my sector, the government sets the parameters. Geraldine Pelletier

If your company is very large, you should seek outside help.

If I were doing it again, instead of going directly to certain big companies, I would have taken the time and used one good agent. France Bourdon

Negotiations and Contracts

Because of their cultural approach, Thais are reluctant to say "no" or create confrontation. Until the final document is signed, reconfirm important items of business several times – approaching them in different ways, using different wording each time – until you are completely sure.

In negotiations, Thais will often ask you for something, and then carve up the package you offer. They expect a detailed itemized list of the services or products you can provide in order to cut corners, look for cost savings, and ask that certain things be dropped. Be ready to discuss cost on all items.

On each little piece of equipment, they'll start saying, "I know you said we need 12, but we'll take four". Claire Seddon

Dropping "Cadillac" features or shipping in smaller quantities makes Canadian products more expensive to deliver. However, you may have to be as flexible as the foreign competition which often supplies stripped-down product lines.

It might not be a program you'd be comfortable delivering, but you'll have to do your best within their budget. They'll say, "We don't need that", when you definitely want to provide it. You must be very creative in what you put together. Claire Seddon

Slightly defective products or delayed delivery times may be tolerated in the short term, but the Thais will not forget it [illegible]e practice is not recommended.

[illegible]roviding proper training is expensive but may help you [illegible]te.

We were told that the training we supplied was very superior. I discovered they had received training for free from country X but they ended up just sitting in a corner reading a manual. Claire Seddon

Thais may try to trade off safety and function for a lower price.

They have not yet learned the value of quality. My product is better than my foreign competition's, and in other countries I can prove that quickly and get on to whether or not they want it. But in Thailand, I have to spend a tremendous amount of time on price and quality.
Valerie Shore Cron

They would buy components from several sources where they could get the lowest price, and try to assemble the product. Often, they couldn't make it work properly – but they didn't seem concerned about that. Or if somebody would get hurt when they were trying to assemble some kind of munition, for example. France Bourdon

I don't think they understood the safety question. There was no negotiation possible there, we just wouldn't do it if it wasn't safe.
Claire Seddon

Look to your competitive situation and your company ethics. Show flexibility but be realistic.

I have to be competitive. If I'm just borderline with the price, I'll try to offer something more as an alternative, or add additional features free of charge, or assistance with the testing, to convince them to take my product. France Bourdon

Be polite, but very firm. Give good reasons for answers. Really explain yourself. Use logic. They would usually understand, but would still want to have some kind of edge – "We'll do that part, you cut this down". Even when you came to an agreement, you'd have to give up "something over there." Claire Seddon

When dealing with government, payment dates can be a negotiating tool.

They'll say, "My budget is only this, and if you want to be paid and not wait until next year, you have to reduce your price."
France Bourdon

Recognize that bargaining is a way of life in Thai business.

The people you're dealing with have to explain to superiors that they got something extra. So we traded off this and that.
France Bo

He gave us some rough times in the meeting next day, totally threw me. I had to struggle against anger, because I had the consensus of the management team. But these situations are give and take. I think he felt that since he'd had to back down on two or three things, he had to stand firm on some particular issue.
Valerie Shore Cron

Thais do not always share our sense of deadlines.

My experience, with government and private industry, is that it won't be done until the last minute, and then you'll scramble like mad to do your part in Canada to honour the contract. You'll sweat buckets. You can fax back explaining –nicely, subtly – what you require. And you'll get it one minute before the deadline or two hours after. And you have to be able to respond like that to the order!

Valerie Shore Cron

Like other Asians, Thais are not litigious and prefer to nurture strong relationships in which problems can be solved amicably.

Although small contracts with known clients can be negotiated by fax, getting written confirmation before leaving Thailand will save time later.

Write down, even by hand, all the points you have agreed on and that are important to cover off in a contract. It might be an MOU, an intent to purchase, or perhaps they're interested in doing this and you're interested in that. Jot down the points and sign it. It's partly for cultural reasons – to ensure there is agreement – and partly because they don't answer faxes in a timeframe acceptable to us, and that'll tie you up when you get home. Valerie Shore Cron

Distribution

Although payment, foreign exchange, and government regulations should not pose problems, Thai Customs authorities can cause delays. Get an agent, or the customer with whom you are dealing, to help in clearing your products.

B. Preparation

There are many approaches to being prepared for doing business in Thailand. Geraldine Pelletier "threw herself into the culture", spending time in the country, getting a feel for its dynamics, and talking to as wide a variety of people as possible. Lorna Wright found the Canadian Embassy very helpful, as was the network of people she had developed from her days in CUSO, and other friends and business people. Valerie Shore Cron from Glanworth, Ontario relied on the local library:

The librarian sourced all sorts of things, and even went through some of the books for me and marked the chapters with specific information that would be good. It was wonderful, because I could never have read all of it. I wanted to know the Thai priorities for industry, particularly the dairy industry – their five-year plans – so I had an idea politically, and the dollar value of imported milk versus what is produced locally. Also cultural manners – dress, behaviour, important, Buddhism etc., so I wouldn't make a total fool of
Valerie Shore Cron

Claire Seddon had run a library.

I had been in charge of putting a library together for a group. I knew about the stuff from External Affairs – they have good basic guides – and also the Asian Development Bank, and the Canadian International Development Agency. I had profiles, utility annual reports, how-to-do-business guides. I was fascinated with different types of magazines. I read a lot about government and culture, and also learned from meeting people coming in from Thailand. With people who had been there, I asked about protocol, culture, and dress.
Claire Seddon

C. Using Contacts To Advantage

Finding the Right Contacts

As elsewhere in Asia, business flows out of good relationships in Thailand.

You can go in there with the best product in the world, and the best price, but your chances of making sales are very, very slim if you haven't developed the relationship. Valerie Shore Cron

Some of our interviewees found contacts in the following ways:

- France Bourdon began by approaching people in External Affairs and the Canadian Department of National Defence who had networks of Thai military staff who had visited and studied in Canada. She then pursued this network in Thailand.
- Lorna Wright had a network from her days as a CUSO volunteer in Thailand, and also found contacts through the Canadian Embassy.
- Valerie Shore Cron's first contacts came through an Agriculture Canada dairy mission to Thailand. She had an associate in Thailand who knew the industry very well, and she obtained additional contacts with farmers through the Thai Department of Livestock Development.
- Claire Seddon's roster of contacts came through Ontario Hydro's extensive linkages in Thailand.
- Geraldine Pelletier made her first contacts through the Thai-Canada Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Embassy. She also had a well-placed agent in Thailand.

Before going to meet Thai contacts, do research on the individuals and their organizations. It helps to mention mutual acquaintances.

Try to find out what he's interested in, too. All of these things are just good business practice in Canada – but essential there.
Lorna Wright

Government contacts are important in Thailand, especially in big business.

If you have good contacts, you can almost forget ab[illegible] rules. There always seems to be a way. France Bourdon

Ascertain which ethnic group (Thai or Chinese) you will be dealing with, and learn about the subtle differences in their respective business cultures.

"Calling out of the blue" in Thailand is no more effective than it is elsewhere in Asia. Ask the Canadian Embassy or a business contact you have previously worked with to call for you or to write to request a meeting.

Keeping in Touch with Contacts – Thai Style

Communications are responded to at varying speeds; everything from "slow" to "same-day service."

As Thais have a lot of mobility in large organizations, keep in touch with them through notes and letters. Keep a record of personal details – the number and ages of their children – and mention them in letters. Most Thais know that Christmas is an important holiday, so send greeting cards.

Junior- and mid-level contacts appreciate the chance to come to Canada.

If they visit Canada when they're young and adaptable, it stays with them for life. They want to come back. Doing business is a way to come back and see people they like. Claire Seddon

Understanding the Hierarchies

Thais are not as strict as some Asians about hierarchies, but they expect respect to be shown to the appropriate people; the private sector is less strict about hierarchy and protocol than government. Thais are usually helpful in pointing out who is in charge.

The Thai form of address for "Mr.", "Mrs.", or "Miss" is "Khun", used with their first, rather than family name. For people who have titles, however, address them as "Doctor", "Khunying", etc.

In big business where a lot is at stake, people will watch you carefully, so learn to be sensitive and read the group. A decision-maker may appear quieter than the others, but will be deferred to when he/she speaks.

Work from the top down.

I always tried to work myself down a hierarchy, it's far easier. The initial contact is crucial, and as long as that person is not in opposition, he usually points you a couple of levels down.
Lorna Wright

Remember, the person with the title may not be a strong person, or the decision-maker, and it may be the person down a level you have to work on. Work on all the levels. Valerie Shore Cron

If someone is obstructing you and you think that someone else might help, approach him/her when the opposition is away. Sometimes, however, nothing works.

[illegible] they either didn't want my product, or if my competitor had [illegible] verbally made the sale, they'd always send me a guy lower

on the echelon. I'd negotiate with him, and it would be "yes, yes", but it would never go up again. You won't be able to go to the right person if they don't want you to. France Bourdon

D. Meetings

As Thailand becomes more Westernized, so does its business culture – especially in the higher levels of government and multi-million-dollar enterprises. If you are in a large corporation and dealing primarily with the elite of government and the private sector, expect meetings to run along Western lines and make your points quickly. Otherwise, the following suggestions may be useful:

Be prepared for the first meeting – especially with government – to end without business being raised; wait for the Thais to take the initiative.

I'll wait as long as three meetings. Think long-term. Think, "At some point down the line I may be interested in this, so I should get to know these people." Lorna Wright

At the first meeting, we talk about things we've done and catch up on news. They're very interested in people and friends they've known. I always go with the flow. If I have only ten minutes left and haven't talked about what I came for, I will of course. But I try to talk in a way that isn't aggressive or offensive. They are much more interested in enjoying the conversation and catching up on personal things. So don't rush it. Claire Seddon

If you have a 30-minute meeting, you'll have maybe seven minutes of actual business discussion. You'll start with chitchat about business generalities, what that person's doing and so forth. Then they talk about their family, or horse-racing if they are into it. And then about half-way through, you'll start into business and have a few serious minutes on it. Then you'll go off it, or touch on it indirectly. Mostly, it follows a question-answer style – "Well, what do you think of this?" You have to find out what the person thinks. And you can tell by their answers whether you're getting anywhere, and whether you're doing alright on something. Valerie Shore Cron

You do not have to be highly technical, but answering quickly and accurately will earn you credibility. Avoid being overbearing; keep your tone low-keyed.

Phrase instructions or advice in a non-directive way that doesn't sound like you're making the individual responsible. Don't say, "Now, you're going to have to make sure that...," but "This will be needed for this reason, and it's important. Can you provide the facility?" Valerie Shore Cron

There are certain definite taboos. If you're sitting, for instance, make sure the sole of your foot is not pointing at someone. And don't use your feet to stop a rolling coin – the King of Thailand's head is on it. The same with rolling pencils... I tend not to sit with my legs crossed at the knees, but rather at the ankles. I don't use my hands much when I'm talking, because it projects a more professional image. I don't park my hands on my hips, or fold my arms over my chest – it projects aggression. And I don't touch people on the head because it is considered the home of one's soul.

Lorna Wright

Meetings are flexible and the Thais will try to accommodate you. You may be kept waiting before meetings with government officials, but generally, private industry is punctual. Due to congested traffic conditions in Bangkok, it is not unusual for meetings to start late. Plan sufficient travel time between meetings.

Being sensitive to cultural differences is important, but generally, Thais do not expect foreigners to behave like them. Handle minor faux pas by acknowledging or apologizing for them.

Usually what happens is that I'll notice them all looking at my hands, which I've been waving. I just poke a little fun at myself so that it will be accepted. Valerie Shore Cron

Detailed meetings or negotiations may require an interpreter, necessitating more time. Expect Thais to want to discuss certain things among themselves in their own language.

E. Social Practices

Socializing after hours helps business relations, so go if invited. Resting in your hotel for long periods, or walking anywhere in the heat, is regarded as strange behaviour. Expect to be picked up and driven everywhere – they do this for all guests, not just women.

Use caution with certain topics of conversation:

- Negative comparisons between Canada and Thailand; do not criticize other countries, including the United States. The Thais will think, "Can someone who criticizes her neighbours be trusted?"
- Comments on Thai politics; learn about it by asking questions.
- Discussions about the Thai royal family; Thais greatly revere them and do not welcome criticism, although they appreciate positive comments.
- Religion; Thais will discuss it if you want, but let them raise the topic.

To break the ice in social situations, ask people if they have been to North America or know anyone from Canada. Or compliment them on the quality and beauty of Thai products and foods.

Seek authoritative advice if you are to be in the presence of Buddhist monks. Special protocol and etiquette is required, some of which is related to gender.

Be polite, but be yourself.

Thais like exuberance. They actually enjoy outgoing, extroverted people with a lot of energy. Just be careful not to offend or say something out of place – no rude jokes, back-slapping, boisterousness, or over-friendliness. Don't get physical or touch people.
Claire Seddon

The Types of Social Functions

Lunch and dinner invitations are common, and if you know people well you may be invited to weddings. Attending receptions is an excellent way to further your business, and hosting them can pay off strategically.

The day before, we'd had a contentious issue that was going to blow the whole thing out of the water. I thought we needed a big cocktail party and should invite So-and-so. I arranged with my Canadian team doing the feasibility study to occupy the rest of the Thais away from me, so I could get one-on-one with the fellow I wanted. Valerie Shore Cron

As Your Contacts Get Warmer

Although it is uncommon, you may be invited to people's homes if your relationship becomes close.

I did get a couple of invitations to people's homes, and accepted one. It was wonderful. They treated me like family, took me shopping, and bought any kind of fruit I pointed at. Claire Seddon

Be prepared to do more for Thai friends than you would normally do for Canadian friends; friendships imply added responsibilities.

You'll know you're becoming a friend when they ask for something for their children. I have friends who send their children over here, for example, and I take care of them for the holidays. Lorna Wright

As you get to know them better, talk about your family and enquire after theirs.

Thai friends, both male and female, may hug you, but wait for them to initiate it.

Women in Thailand – even casual business contacts – will often take your hand when crossing the street, for example.

I initiate hand-holding sometimes – about 30 percent of the time on my part and 70 on theirs. Lorna Wright

Small gifts are welcome but be sensitive to protocol.

They usually don't open gifts in your presence. But sometimes you can tell they're dying to see your reaction to their gift. I usually ask them, "Should I take this to my hotel, or should I open it now?" If they say, "Open it now", do so, but if they say, "It doesn't matter", you probably shouldn't. Valerie Shore Cron

Thais enjoy singing.

One family I visited brought out an American songbook. We sang for an hour and a half. We wouldn't do that here. It was like being back in the '50s, growing up – very refreshing. Claire Seddon

Keep your humour in good taste, and limit your alcohol intake.

It's fine that you travel alone – they really think it's something ! But don't discuss anything off-colour. Have one drink – that's fine – but they watch how much you're drinking. Valerie Shore Cron

Dress

Dress is usually business attire, although sombre colours are not popular. Short sleeves are allowed, but sleeveless outfits are considered immodest. Thais dress very casually and usually Western-style. Be prepared for high heat and humidity.

EFFECTIVE APPROACHES FOR THE REGION

The following section is a summary of interviewees' general advice on approaching business in the Asia Pacific region.

A. Business Practices

Commit the necessary time and resources to develop strong relationships in Asia. Although friendships in North America are a pleasant element of business, in Asia business flows out of friendly relationships, nurtured over time.

Know your product or service well, and be able to price every element in delivering it – including training. Prepare several prices for downward bargaining, and be flexible.

Using and paying for separate professional services, as opposed to having them wrapped into a project for free, is not a widespread practice in some Asian countries. Providers of professional services may encounter unfamiliar demands and haggling over fees.

When aiming at low-cost manufacturing in Asia, know world-wide labour costs and material prices. Develop strategies to deal with late delivery times and variable quality. Introducing new manufacturing technology, products, designs, or markets will make you welcome.

Solve serious problems face-to-face, rather than by letter or fax. In some countries, problems left unsolved may stay that way until your return.

Although business practices in some countries are perceived as "corrupt," interviewees dealt comfortably and pragmatically with any practices they found to be unorthodox by Canadian standards.

In Asia, courts are seldom used to settle business disputes, and the spirit, rather than the letter, of a contract is observed. Problems are handled in the context of solid, trusting relationships, which is why Asians research and evaluate their prospective partners very carefully, and build business relationships with them slowly.

In Asia, saving face – one's own and other's – is extremely important. Even in tense situations, maintain a pleasant decorum and never lose your temper.

Racial, religious, or cultural intolerance is not acceptable in Asia or anywhere else. Keep anyone prone to such prejudices away from your business dealings.

Our lawyers, who were from country X, flew in and were complete boors. Our client called us up afterwards, just furious, and said "These guys thought I was a stupid Chinese." It nearly blew our deal. Hannah Fisher

Being foreign and female can often work to your advantage – many interviewees reported success gaining access to high-level people because they were considered unusual.

Examine and drop any stereotypes you may have: that Asian women are passive and male-dominated; that Asian men are biased against businesswomen; that you need to become passive or assertive to cope with a gender bias against businesswomen. Leave your gender stereotypes at home. Most Asians will react to you as a foreigner first, a woman second.

B. Preparation

Develop a precise strategic plan for Asia, and research and approach each country separately.

North Americans think when they come to Asia that it's all the same – they lack a knowledge of the different cultures of Asia. They apply Japan to Hong Kong, and start bowing when they come into our office, and we get so confused. Elizabeth L. Thomson

To prepare, read market-specific studies, talk to and cultivate ties with other businesspeople (Canadian or Asian) experienced in the target country, visit the country, and acquire some cross-cultural knowledge. Learn the protocol of meetings and the indirect or non-verbal communication patterns in the country. Contacts can be identified through:

- The Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, which also supports other bilateral Asia-related organizations, and which maintains offices across Canada and the Asia Pacific region;
- Industry, Science and Technology Canada, which houses an International Trade Centre, for each Canadian region;
- The Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Ottawa, which supports a number of business councils promoting Canada-Asia trade;
- Provincial government trade promotion sections.

Learn to deal with clients' differing levels of educational or technical expertise, especially when manufacturing or transferring technology in developing countries. Use team-building and communication skills to provide guidance and assurance.

I have a linen line I'm launching. I sit with workers on the floor of the factory and do designing and re-designing. Maria Flannery

They remember once I teach them, their quality is high. If they learn how to do it, I can give them more work. And they remember who the woman is that they're making these things for. They're delighted when I come. Harma Hill

Be low-keyed, but be yourself; there is no need to over-adapt. Because Asian cultures tend to be more formal and concerned with protocol than Canada, be polite and respectful. Take your cue from how Asian colleagues behave.

I use the good parts of how they interact with each other, and do the same, out of courtesy. I have picked up not just what I liked, but what was important to them – which happened to coincide. To other women I would say: leave what's considered North American strengths at home – i.e. bullying and aggressive behaviour, which I don't think are a sign of strength anywhere. Germaine Gibara

Bring several hundred business cards in English and the language of the country; you will use more in Asia than in Canada.

Women may wish to tap into the many networks of Asian and Canadian business and professional women in Asia. Some interviewees reported having female clients, many of whom controlled family budgets. Female contacts may also offer useful advice should cross-cultural problems arise.

C. Using Contacts to Advantage

Take the time to fully research, target, and evaluate contacts. Asia abounds with people seeking business opportunities, and many will not be the right connection.

Calling "out of the blue" is not done, and may only result in meetings with the lower echelons. Get an introduction to senior levels.

Spend time and energy following-up with contacts and clients. Sending notes, clipping interesting articles, remembering their children's birthdays, telephoning, meeting them elsewhere when they are travelling abroad – these are things which help to strengthen important business relationships.

Hierarchies exist in varying degrees throughout Asia. Working within these makes everyone comfortable – show respect for age and position, and use people's titles and last names. As Asian hierarchies often work by consensus, assume that contacts at all levels are involved in the decision-making process. When unsure of someone's position in the hierarchy, seek third-party advice.

Initially, aim at contacts as far up the hierarchy as possible and then work downwards. Continue to use the same contacts; if they end up impeding your business, necessitating going directly to the boss, involve a go-between to save face for both sides.

Cultivate friends in the hierarchy by helping middle-level contacts bargain for things from their bosses, or by having them invited to social functions.

Asia runs on networks: family, old classmates, close friends. Even one good contact can lead to a host of others.

Clients' needs drive your business requirements. Provide the high-quality service demanded in the 1990s – adjusting style and products to meet client's needs and demands.

The art of serving the customer well is actually understanding his needs, how he behaves, what he wants. He pays for that, so do what he wants. Research all aspects of your customer's technical problems, people problems, whatever problems – and respond with sensitivity and knowledge instead of going in like a bulldozer.
Germaine Gibara

D. Meetings

Communication in most Asian countries is subtle and indirect – body language often plays a major role. Observe Asian colleagues for clues to effective non-verbal communication.

Many Asians will not say "no" directly or sound the alert when they are experiencing problems. Become adept at drawing out unstated needs, judging when something has not been understood, and realizing when something is wrong. Trust your business instincts and revisit, check, verify, or confirm when you sense that "no news is bad news."

They may say yes but there's this little blankness in their eyes..
Claire Seddon

Train yourself to be alert and super sensitive to people's eye motions and what they do with their hands. Hannah Fisher

I laugh and say "so you understood EVERYTHING I said, right?" And they say "well..." Jean Yu

Expect to be outnumbered at most Asian meetings. This shows the consensus-building culture, not an attempt at intimidation. Do not feel you must pad your side with Canadian colleagues. Ask where to sit, as there will be a definite seating pattern. If you do not know the other party's rank in the hierarchy, quietly ask advice.

During meetings, look at and address the senior people – even if they do not speak English. The Asian side may take time out to discuss things in their own language. Be patient, even if you do not understand.

Interpreters are often female, and can be natural allies for Canadian businesswomen. Sit with them before a meeting, explain your product and business objective, and ask for their assistance in communicating your needs.

When hosting Asians, meet them at the elevator, or front door, and see them off there. Always serve refreshments.

E. Social Practices

Accepting after-hours invitations is an excellent way to cement business relationships, and in many Asian countries is an integral part of the business life. Allow extra time for this sort of socializing and make an effort to accept invitations. Lunches and dinners are common.

Habits of physical contact vary by country. When conducting business, restrict contact to a handshake. Even with friends, do not initiate physical shows of affection, but be ready to respond.

In Asia, family relationships are important on both the personal and business level. Asian colleagues routinely enquire about one's background, parents, spouse, children, and colleagues; demonstrating that they are important to you by showing photographs can be reassuring.

Only two social venues were cited as uncomfortable: hostess bars or men's clubs, (try suggesting some other social activity to your host), and social gatherings in countries like Indonesia where the genders sit apart (move back and forth between the two groups).

In Asian cultures, even with people you have known a relatively short period of time, friendship implies more responsibility than it does in Canada. To be asked – especially for something far-reaching – means you are trusted.

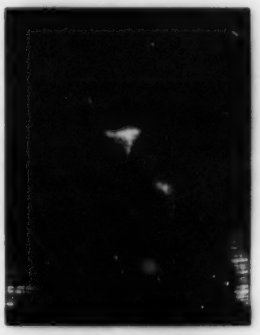
Friends can call upon each other for more things than we do in Canada. Thai friends have sent their children over here, and I have taken care of them for a holiday. I helped steer another Asian friend's daughter through the process of getting into university, and I keep an eye on her now she's in Canada. Lorna Wright

F. A Final Note

One interviewee's comment sums up this study.

I was under the impression at first that because I was a woman it would be very tough – tough for them to accept me and tough for me to accomplish my objectives. During the first couple of meetings, they were a bit reserved, and I thought that because I was a woman I'd have to be more careful. But once I started developing some very good relationships with the customers, I realized that it had nothing to do with my being a woman at all. It was because I was new. I was a strange face. The people in these countries don't open up to you right away. They want to know who you are, and that you'll be around for a long time. So it was just a matter of their feeling that comfort and trust level with me, and after that it was fine. So, my advice to women? Just go! Yvonne van der Ven

CANADIAN WOMEN DOING BUSINESS IN ASIA



France Bourdon

Now head of her own international consulting company, Gestion Stratégique Pacifique Inc. in Montreal, **France Bourdon** was at the time of our interview serving as International Marketing Manager for SNC Industrial Technologies selling defence products and ammunition into Asia. Mme. Bourdon has a B.Sp.A. in Communication with a second level diploma in international administration, and speaks French and English. SNC hired her into the "male-dominated" world of defence products – a precedent for the company and a rarity in the industry – for her international marketing capabilities. Previous to SNC, Ms. Bourdon had her own company, Monitronik Ltd., which sold electric and electronic control panels into Japan and elsewhere in Asia.

Peaceful times have brought a shrinking, competitive world market for conventional defence products. The shedding of unwanted stocks at low prices is widespread. In both Thailand and Japan, where Ms. Bourdon focused much of her effort, establishing senior-level contacts was her main task for SNC. She foresees the need for SNC, a new player in the region, to establish co-operative ventures with local partners.

Hannah Fisher

Hannah Fisher is a well-known film festival organizer in Vancouver, and director of the Canadian branch of an American company, White Wind Entertainment Inc.. Born in China, Ms. Fisher spoke Mandarin at an early age, although she has forgotten much of it. Her lifelong fascination has been Asian films – and how to introduce them to North America. She visited China in 1973 as a member of the Canada China Friendship Association, began trying to get Chinese films into North America in 1977-78, and succeeded in 1983 in organizing the first major Chinese film festival in Canada to be sanctioned by the Chinese government. She has also done research for the Canadian government in Asia and elsewhere, seeking ways to present Canadian films abroad.

White Wind, a new company aimed at Asian-North American co-productions, may bring Ms. Fisher close to achieving her lifetime dream. Little-known but excellent film directors from poorer countries in Asia lack access to North American equipment, technical expertise, and markets. While Ms. Fisher supplies the contacts and the expertise on films, her American partner in White Wind has strengths in knowledge of the Hollywood system, of distribution, financing, etc. In an approach to Hong Kong and Taiwan, they hope to develop the relationships necessary for realizing projects.

Fondly called by the Chinese "the Female Norman Bethune of Travel", **Maria Flannery** is president of Conference Travel in Toronto. Managing about 30 employees and yearly business volumes of $10-$14 million, she speaks several modern languages and has studied Latin, Ancient Greek, and Byzantine history. To a classics scholar, the varied countryside and historical sites she saw during her first trip to China in 1976 were irresistible. Setting up tours and conferences through the China International Travel Service, then the only travel agent in China, she plunged into unpaid consultancy, broadcasting, and lecturing on how China could develop its tourism industry. She persuaded the Chinese to offer more realistic pricing for their tours – "I told them China needed to be seen by former missionaries, students, young people" – and became the first travel agent in North America to offer a much cheaper package.

Maria Flannery

Conference Travel does about one third of its business in Asia. Its original focus was conferences, especially medical, but customers asked for more. As well as corporate, retail, and wholesale travel, the company now provides "theme" artistic and classical tours to China and the rest of the world – the latest being tours along the Silk Road. ("I warn people it's not North York, but some of them don't read small print or listen.") China has been a difficult and even unprofitable market at times, but Ms. Flannery loves the people and admits she will "never learn." Even now she is contemplating a plunge into brand new fields – manufacturing and trading. "My friends in China keep asking me to do it".

Germaine Gibara has for five years been President of Alcan Automotive Structures, a division of Alcan Aluminum Limited which develops new products for the automotive industry. She has an MA in Economics/Political Science, is a Chartered Financial Analyst, and attended the Harvard Business School for Advanced Management. She speaks French, English, Italian, and Arabic. Women are rare in Alcan management, especially so in R&D, but Ms. Gibara was hand picked to set up the division five years ago.

Germaine Gibara

Alcan Automotive Structures, with 24 direct (68 indirect) employees, focuses about a third of its activity on Japan. Alcan owns 46 percent of well-known Nippon Light Metals, which Ms. Gibara views as an enormous advantage – "You don't have to come into the market and spell your name." Her task in Japan was reaching the [illegible] industry. To expand on some connections which NLM had, Ms. Gibara hired a Canadian ex-university chancellor who commanded enormous respect in the Japanese university community. With him, she located the professors working on key research for the car industry, and worked backwards to the companies themselves. This network job accomplished, her consultant faded from the picture and Ms. Gibara carried on. "Incorporating aluminum in cars requires a lot of technological work. You must develop the material and the technology to use it, and that requires a rapport with the leading edge customer. We are solving the technical problems of the company we work with by putting in a technical team, and thus we become, hopefully, for the next 100 years, their supplier." Her strategic advantage? "The quality of the R&D and technical support."

After studying journalism in the Netherlands, Vancouver's **Harma Hill** became a fashion buyer, then worked for the Dutch government in trade and tourism. Her marriage brought her to Canada, where for 15 years she has pursued four areas of vigorous activity: management consultant, international marketer of companies and products, manufacturer, and lecturing on all of the above and on self-improvement. In the last four years, she has, among other things, manufactured clothing in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the PRC for customers in Europe and North America. She approached Hong Kong through previous connections made in Europe, and headquarters her activities there with an associate, and flies in four or five times a year to transact business.

Harma Hill

Ms. Hill feels that business people in Canada should think more globally in competitive terms. A search for low-wage, productive labour led her first into Asia, then to shift her manufacturing between Asian countries – and now may lead her elsewhere. "Eastern Europe now offers better factories and productivity, and a higher level of skill than many Asian countries." Although many business strategists might disagree, she also feels that Canadians may focus too much on Asia. "Asians do not buy our goods; they manufacture goods themselves. There is not much money to be made in transferring technology to them. It is Western Europe which has higher incomes and demand these days for buying goods."

Dora Kay (Kwok) of Vancouver was with NOVA Corporation of Alberta for 15 years, and attained the position of Vice President, Hong Kong. Hired for her specialty in materials engineering, and fluent in English, Mandarin, and Cantonese, she was a "natural" to set up and run NOVA's Hong Kong office from 1980-89. Previous to her 1978 visit to scout for opportunities, NOVA had hosted some Chinese delegations but had no other contacts. Ms. Kay set up an operation focused on China, also covering Taiwan, Japan, and Korea. Since the closure of the Hong Kong office in 1989, Ms. Kay travels several times a year to the region to keep up business – which is a challenge. "If you're not living there, your contacts meet a million other people while you're away in Canada. They don't treat you like one of themselves any more."

Dora Kay

NOVA Corporation has 10,000 employees, and specializes in oil and gas transmission and the production of petrochemicals. In addition, it sells services in technical design, engineering, construction supervision, and training. During the 1970s NOVA saw opportunities in energy development needs in China and the rest of Asia. While known and respected in Canada, it was a stranger in Asia, so it decided on a Hong Kong office as a way to penetrate the regional market. Business volumes peaked at $150 million in 1988, but costs were high, and the company has had to retrench. At the time of publication, NOVA Corporation was pondering how it should structure itself to meet the future.

Vancouver's **Eunice Ludlow** was raised in Uganda and Kenya and trained as a solicitor in Britain, before "escaping" to Canada. Fluent in Swahili, she speaks passable French and understands German. A business consultant on and off since the 1960s, she has focused on Asia during the last five years, running Tang Peacock, a company handling investor immigrant funds. The company wound down after differences among shareholders, and Ms. Ludlow now promotes various trade opportunities. A strong network of friends and contacts in numerous countries is her usual source of business. She is a director of PACOM, the Pacific Asian Congress of Municipalities, comprised mainly of mayors of Asian cities. "We don't realize how valuable this can be." She spends four to six months a year in Asia.

Eunice Ludlow

Ms. Ludlow, like other interviewees, feels that Canadian companies move too slowly to seize Asian business opportunities. On her first visit to Taiwan in 1986, she saw that once currency controls were lifted, the country would "bound out" with business opportunities. She brought several back to Canada, but her partners were hesitant, and at that point she lacked a local network to feed opportunities to other businesspeople. She has worked since to rectify both problems. When interviewed, she was just about to take several B.C. businesspeople on a mission to Pakistan. "It's jumping. And a beautiful place to visit."

Susan Madden owns the tour wholesaler Bali and Orient Travel in Vancouver. A practical, self-made individual who speaks English and Spanish, she employs five people and did $1.8 million in business during 1990, 70 percent with travel agencies and 30 percent with consumers. She arrived in Canada from the United States and set about securing a foothold in the local travel market – a market which she found less competitive and more "closed" than that in the United States. During a 1987 holiday in Indonesia, she met a local company, Vayatour, and later handed them some business. "They don't forget things like that." When Vayatour later debated closing its fizzling Canadian operation, Ms. Madden was able to convince them to let her take it over – and make money.

An instinctive strategist, Ms. Madden had to "jump in and work" for the first six months, then developed a plan to become a "top producer" for Indonesia – visibly so to both Indonesians and Canadians. Now, foreseeing that North American tour companies may begin to cut out wholesalers like herself and go directly to Indonesian companies, she is aiming at a different approach to the market – achieving representation in North America for some of the smaller Indonesian hotels, transport companies, and "offbeat" airlines perhaps through a consortium. "I've seen it work for Africa." In several years, she also hopes to approach CIDA with an initiative to improve opportunities for Indonesian women in the travel industry.

Oonagh McNerney is President of Extrufix Inc., a small family-owned Ontario manufacturing company with 45 Canadian employees, sales of $5-6 million, and an assembly operation in the United States. Export sales are her main focus. After an Ontario business mission to Japan in 1983, she sold product for several years through Seibu-Seiyu department stores – "But knowing what I do now, I would use a niche market approach, not a mass marketer." She was the first woman from Canada to participate in the Japan Business Studies program run by Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) in 1984. "I talked the organizers into including a 'first ever' visit to a Japanese kitchen. In order to sell products there, we must see and understand their lifestyles." She still smiles about the serious male buyers at early trade shows, who had probably never been in a kitchen. "I'd say, 'but how do you take out the garbage?' and they'd look at me with great surprise." Many changes have occurred since then, she notes. Many of the buyers are female now. "And with so many wives working, younger Japanese men are becoming more like their North American counterparts."

Oonagh McNerney

Under their kitchen sinks, many Canadians have Extrufix's best-known product – a small wire frame with a pull-up roll of garbage bags. It is no longer sold in Japan. As wood is mainly imported and expensive, Japanese are reluctant to deface or use screws in their kitchen cabinets, and many still like to keep the rice cooker under the sink. "To retool for a different cabinet attachment would not be practical, and with our expansion into the United States, our concentration had to be here." But Japan still beckons. Ms. McNerney likes the challenge, and is currently involved in a joint venture with another product line in Japan.

Juliana Markus of Vancouver travelled through Asia for the first time in the mid-1980s while on a half-year sabbatical from business writing and marketing consulting. Arriving back in Vancouver with a suitcase full of Indonesian batiks, she found such a positive response to the fabric that she returned to Indonesia within a year with orders to produce more. The following year, she formed Primitive Passion Linens, which designed and produced its own line of high-end, specialty batik bed linens in Indonesia and exported them to Hong Kong, Singapore, Canada, and the United States for the next three years. When the 1991 recession loomed, she sold the design rights to an Indonesia-based manufacturing and trading company, and returned to Vancouver where she is in private consulting.

Juliana Markus

Ms. Markus, by her own admission, suffers from an affliction known as entrepreneurialism. "I wasn't interested in the long-term goal of becoming a major manufacturer; the challenge was to start and develop a business and a lifestyle that were unlike anything I'd ever known before." Indonesia, she felt, was an ideal location for producing specialty designs – both in terms of the detailed craftsmanship available and the manufacturing acceptance of smaller volumes. The large profit margins in her product line would also allow room for experiment and mistakes. She employed few permanent staff other than for Canadian and United States sales, and for an office, warehouse, and distribution from Los Angeles. She finally found it overly demanding to personally supervise both the production in Jogjakarta and the North American distribution. However, doing business in Asia did help her develop new skills. "I became the queen of contingency planning."

Marietta Nuyens of Toronto has spent most of the last six years in business in Asia. With a business administration degree from the University of Ottawa, she has moved into computer consultancy. Before setting up their partnership in TISSA Systems, she and her husband lived and worked for several years in Japan. "At night, we could laugh about the Japanese. Of course, it wasn't so easy when we got to Hong Kong, my husband being Chinese himself." The couple moved to Hong Kong in 1985 and stayed until 1989, offering systems solutions to companies which used relational databases. Fluent in English, Dutch, and French, Ms. Nuyens has not yet moved beyond "survival Cantonese."

Marietta Nuyens

TISSA Systems, operating in Hong Kong for four years, had a range of customers, small to large, and advertised itself through word of mouth. Its market niche was good – in this database area, competitors were few. Its emphasis on quality was also at that time hard to find in Hong Kong. Sales grew rapidly, and the number of employees ranged from four to ten. Admittedly, the fluency of Ms. Nuyens' husband in Cantonese was a major factor in TISSA's success.

Dorothea Oakley is a self-made entrepreneur from British Columbia, "living the life of Mrs. Robinson" in Taipei and enjoying it greatly. She first went to Taiwan in 1977, sourcing arts and craft supplies, and returned in 1986 to spend four years as manager of the Asia Pacific branch of a Canadian company owned by her brother. Now she has her own company, Oakley Pacific Ltd., with three employees. She does $4 million in business annually, manufacturing juvenile products.

Dorothea Oakley

In 1986, Ms. Oakley's initial line of activity was sourcing baby strollers and wood parts used in furniture for juvenile products companies in North America. Recently, wages in Taiwan have been steadily rising; while American buyers moved out of Taiwan into lower-wage countries, she was seeing "for every six Americans leaving, four Germans coming in." She began to think about harnessing Asian productivity to quality European designs. Although her head office was uninterested, she gradually developed a small wedge of business with Spain's largest baby stroller manufacturer. "We got along well," says Ms. Oakley, who believes in acting on instincts. "After the second day in Taiwan, he fired the interpreter and said 'we'll speak with our feelings.'" Using her customers' money for financing, she brought European designs to her Taiwanese contacts, who were keen to learn and break into new markets. The result? Growing sales into Europe. Today, Ms. Oakley does no business with North America – she is too busy manufacturing for European customers. When she broke from her brother's firm, she agreed not to touch North America until 1993.

Although she is now with Andersen Consulting, **Geraldine Pelletier** was interviewed relative to her former position as Director of Business Development, Asia for a large company based in Ontario. Ms. Pelletier has a post-graduate education and speaks English, French, and Mandarin; she is also studying Thai (but points out it is not essential for the Thai market). In business for 12 years, Ms. Pelletier formerly was in partnership in a business consultancy which specialized in helping Canadian industry enter the People's Republic of China. She first visited Thailand in the 1970s as a tourist, and has done limited business there for five years. Her move to the Ontario company marked a real plunge into the market. "I felt there was about $500 million of potential business for the company in the Far East and Southeast Asian region, if it was ready to pursue it. The company was in a business sector to which Thailand – and Asia in general – has recently given high priority."

Ms. Pelletier's former company is publicly owned, employs 30,000 people and had 1990 sales of $2 billion. Prior to her being hired, it had no business in Asia and no offices there. While she did identify a significant amount of business for it in Asia, the time and effort required for business development was eventually judged to be too great a demand on the company's resources at that point, given its position in the global market.

Claire Seddon is an International Account Executive in the New Business Ventures Division of Ontario Hydro. She markets Hydro's many utility services, mainly to South and Southeast Asia, including Pakistan ("a big success story for us"). A graduate in science and physiology, Ms. Seddon worked in that area before a career change in 1972 took her to Ontario Hydro. She made many friends in the Thai energy sector while running the Division's incoming missions program in the early 1980s, and kept up these contacts while visiting Thailand during her three-year secondment to External Affairs and International Trade, Canada. (Her official "beat" was Burma.) Her Thai contacts strengthened, Ms. Seddon returned to Ontario Hydro in 1990, where she continues in her marketing activity. "I think they just react to me as Claire, not as External Affairs or Ontario Hydro."

Claire Seddon

Ontario Hydro employs some 27,000 people. Ninety of them work in Ms. Seddon's home division, New Business Ventures, created in 1984 to market Hydro's wide array of services and know-how worldwide. Active in developing countries for decades, Ontario Hydro has positioned itself in Thailand partly through a Technical Co-operation Agreement with EGAT, the Thai electrical utility, which has brought it training projects both in-house and overseas. Its joint venture with a Canadian equipment manufacturer has also successfully sold power plant test equipment (designed by Hydro) to EGAT. Other avenues the company has used into Thailand include closely following the activities of the international development banks, and employing a knowledgeable local representative.

Valerie Shore Cron is Export Manager for Shore Holsteins International in Glanworth, Ontario. Versed in business in Asia, she travelled to Thailand to join an Agriculture Canada dairy technical mission in 1988. She quickly saw that although Thailand wants to replace dairy imports with domestic production, it lacks the best technology and genetics. Working through a respected agent in Thailand, she pursued the initiative with enthusiasm. The resultant dairy demonstration project in Thailand is the largest initiative ever financed through CIDA's Industrial Co-operation program – $2.16 million over four and a half years – exemplifying an aid-trade strategy. For Ms. Shore Cron, it has meant selling 110 heifers, one bull, and 100 frozen embryos, and providing project management on the Canadian side. As well as positioning Shore Holsteins for further sales to Thailand, it serves as a convenient showcase for customers in other countries in South and East Asia.

A family-owned firm, Shore Holsteins now does about four percent of its business in Asia. While its initial aim was to sell embryos to Thailand, the priority has become teaching farmers management, genetics, and breeding patterns. "These people are very intelligent and have a lot of book knowledge, but not practical experience. They weren't, at that point, able to manage their recipients to the level that they could have a good enough pregnancy rate from the frozen embryos." The project itself is going well. "While Thai farmers are lucky to peak at 1-12 litres a day, our animals peak at 30-32, and we don't have things running perfectly yet."

Elizabeth L. Thomson, originally from Thunder Bay, is president of ICS International in Hong Kong. A graduate of the University of Western Ontario and McGill, and a member of the law societies of Hong Kong, Upper Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom, she speaks several European languages as well as Cantonese ("of the taxi and restaurant variety"). A 1977 visit just after her graduation brought her a job offer at a Hong Kong party. Four months on a large international bankruptcy case followed ("every law student's dream – I wouldn't be doing that *now* in Canada.) Then, when her employer went bankrupt in 1980, she started her own company. At one point, she maintained offices in London and Toronto, but pulled back when this became too onerous. She has served as a director of the Hong Kong-Canada Business Association, the Business and Professional Women's Association, and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce – and founded the Hong Kong Women Business Owners Club. "I want to get travelling Canadian women out of their hotel rooms at night, out having a good time and networking for business with women here."

Elizabeth L. Thomson

ICS International was founded by Ms. Thomson; it originally employed two people and now employs 40. Its business volume is about $5 million, and it handles $100 million a year in letters of credit. International in scope, it is striving to further broaden its client base, particularly in North America. It has three areas of focus: international tax planning (Hong Kong has a unique tax structure), international trade financing and letters of credit, and international immigration. Ms. Thomson points out that ICS is very active in helping companies do business in Asia, and has a history of success stories. She makes no predictions as to what will happen in 1997, but adds with typical Hong Kong flair, "If I have to retire in 1997, I want to have made as much money as possible. If you can't make a few million in five years, you shouldn't be in business."

Fluent in English, Dutch, and French, Ottawa's **Yvonne van der Ven** began in history studies, did an M.A. in Economics at Concordia (while working full-time), but decided that international marketing would offer more creativity and people contact. Recruited from Teleglobe Canada five years ago, she is now an International Marketing Executive, seeking out and developing business opportunities for Telesat Canada, Canada's domestic telecommunications satellite operating agency. While she deals in many quarters, including with the European Space Agency – "I know I'm spread too thin!" – Indonesia has been an area of market focus for Ms. van der Ven since 1985.

Yvonne van der Ven

Telesat has 850 employees and in 1990 had sales of about $170 million. To foreign clients, it provides the entire range of services relating to operating and maintaining satellite communication. To name only a few, it helps the client through the various phases of the feasibility study, monitors the manufacturer of the spacecraft on site, provides sophisticated flight control software, and offers the networking requirements and the software for designing and planning the user's earth station network. The big prize which Telesat vies for is large satellite program monitoring contracts. It stays in position through executives like Ms. van der Ven, pursuing smaller projects, keeping up its visibility, and building its contacts.

Arlyle Waring owns and manages the Montreal company, ConsultAsia Inc., providing trade-related consultancy to business and government. Fluent in English, French, and Mandarin, she studied political science at McGill. After an early trip to China in 1974, she returned in 1978-81 to study a year each at Beijing and Nanjing Universities. "Many of my fellow students have ended up in Beijing in ministries, commissions, and trade associations." Ten years ago, she set up ConsultAsia Inc. with a partner who has since left the firm. Neither had a strong business background. And while Nanjing acquaintances and contacts from incoming delegations were an obvious network for China, the fledgling company needed to understand Canadian industry and government, too. Some mentoring from senior male contacts in government helped, as did work with a large Hong Kong concern in lining up Canadian companies for trade exhibits.

Arlyle Waring

ConsultAsia Inc. employs eight people, had 1990 sales of about half a million dollars, and has until recently stayed "close to government", balancing private sector work with numerous projects related to Canadian trade. As Ms. Waring ruefully admits, this strategy is vulnerable to changes in a market's priority, or to political upheavals. In 1989, not only were government projects put on hold, but so were many private ones – Canadian companies rarely approach China on their own, without government trade or aid help. Ms. Waring's present strategy is to diversify geographically, for self-protection. "We're not leaving China and never will, because our very substantial contacts and our work experience lie there, but I cannot continue to let it make up 80 percent of our revenues."

Thirty-year-old **Kimberly Watson** is Export Sales Manager, Fresh & Frozen Division, for the large Atlantic seafood processing company, Connors Bros. Limited. With a B.Sc. in marine biology, she was recruited into this job three years ago from a position in New Brunswick's provincial research council (RPC). One of the few women in management in the company, she says the question asked, when she began, was whether a woman could carry enough clout with the Japanese, but she was taken on because of her strong technical knowledge.

Kimberly Watson

Ms. Watson handles any product going into Japan, which is the company's second largest market, and all frozen products going into Europe. In total, she is responsible for $15-$20 million in sales each year. As for the firm's strategy, "We are one of the largest suppliers in the world of herring roe for the Japanese market. Other traditional products include snow crab, lobster, and capelin, among others. In the 1990s, our strategy is to expand our customer base and diversify product lines." In Asia, her areas of marketing focus will include Korea and Taiwan.

Lorna Wright has been in international consulting for 16 years, offering competitor analysis, market feasibility, proposal writing, assistance with cultural dimensions in negotiations, briefings, training seminars, and management audits. She holds the post of assistant professor of International Management at Queen's University, her degrees being in linguistics, education in developing countries, international management, and business administration. Fluent in several key Asian languages (Thai, Indonesian, Japanese), she has a knowledge of many others. Dr. Wright first went to Thailand for CUSO in 1969 and stayed five years.

Lorna Wright

In the past, Dr. Wright's projects took her in a number of directions, but she is now focusing her energies on the new Centre for Canada-Asia Business Relations at Queen's University. Initially targeting Japanese companies, especially those with subsidiaries in Canada, she will offer briefings, training courses, or consulting on how to achieve positioning within Canada in order to attack the North American market. She will also work with Canadian companies, aiming at "medium-sized companies who have a product which could be sold or manufactured overseas, but who do not have the necessary expertise and don't know what they're getting into." Promoting alliances and consortia will be one approach.

Jean Yu is an associate lawyer with Boughton Peterson Yang Anderson in Vancouver, and has been with the firm five years. Fluent in English, Mandarin, and Cantonese, she specializes in corporate, commercial, and real estate law. When she graduated, she did a self-inventory and decided to find her niche in Canada's Asia-related business. Her family got her some introductions in Taiwan, her birthplace, but after that she was on her own, struggling to grasp Taiwanese culture. "I moved to Canada so young that I didn't always relate to how they were thinking." Now, a pet peeve is consultants who "peddle the mystique. I'm trying to break down the barriers and help people get business done." Many of her clients are Taiwanese, and she helped in setting up the firm's office in Taiwan.

Jean Yu

Boughton Peterson Yang Anderson is an all-service law firm with twenty-three partners (three of them women) and 118 employees. About one quarter of the firm's business is Asia-related, and it maintains offices in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore. A senior partner works out of Hong Kong, flying to Taiwan and Singapore when necessary. The firm's Taiwan operation has four people including a British Columbia-trained lawyer and a New York-trained female lawyer.

Deborah Zbarsky has recently returned to Canada from Japan, where she had lived since 1973. In Japan, an initial part-time job in translation found her work in securities, first for a Japanese brokerage house and then for British-owned Baring Securities. Hooked on the work, which "brought out an aggressive side I hadn't been aware of", she became the first foreign woman to pass the Japanese equivalent of the Canadian securities exchange exams. Her work involved preparing research reports recommending buys or sells on Japanese stocks, and much networking with Japanese companies and industry associations. Fluent in Japanese, with a university degree in Japanese literature, she also speaks Hebrew and some French.

Deborah Zbarsky

Baring Securities bought out the small Japanese brokerage which employed Ms. Zbarsky and six other people, and by the time she left had expanded to 150 people. The firm's success, Ms. Zbarsky feels, was due to its being foreign-owned and thus able to offer more independent advice than many Japanese brokers who are under government pressure to stress the positive. Baring's British management would not promote women to director positions; ironically, many Japanese women choose to work for foreign firms in Japan in order to escape such discriminatory treatment.

CANADIAN WOMEN DOING BUSINESS IN ASIA

Private Sector

Inge Bailey, Flanagan and Associates, Vancouver
JayLynn Bennett, JayLynn H. Bennett and Associates, Toronto
Michelle Brazeau, Directory of Canadian Business in Japan, Tokyo
Maria Correia, Klohn-Leonoff, Vancouver
Caroline Cross, Brukar Industries, Toronto
Rosemary Curylo, Novella Research Inc., Vancouver
Helen Fish, Ontario Hydro, Toronto
Mackie Galbraith, Prospectus Investment and Trade Partners, Ottawa
Patricia Glenn, Intecura Consulting, Alberta
Lisa Greenberg, International Food Network, Willowdale
Evelyn Hannon, CineEve, Montreal
Laura Hansen, JBI International, Vancouver
Margaret Harris, Sanden Machine Ltd., Cambridge
Suzanne Hebert, Groupe Conseil Eduplus, Montreal
Irene E. Johnson, Hickling Corporation, Ottawa
Isabel Kelly, Victoria
Maggie Maier, One World Communications, Thunder Bay
Danielle Medina, Aliments Medina Inc., Montreal
Madeleine Paquin, March Shipping, Montreal
Jane Pemberton, Walt Disney Co., Japan
Patricia Randall, Klohn Leonoff, Vancouver
Dorothy Riddle, Service Growth Consultants, Halifax/Ottawa
Loreen Riley, Consultant, Edmonton
Sumi Ross, Vancouver
Pamela Salloway, Pamap Technologies Corp., Victoria
Doreen Sanders, Editor, "Women in Management", London, Ont.
Anne Silvitzky, Roche International Ltd, Quebec
Geraldine Vance, Burson-Marsteller Ltd, Toronto

Business Associations

Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, its staff and Board of Directors
Dee Pannu, Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Ottawa
Doreen Ruso, Canadian Manufacturers' Association, Toronto
Joan Cherry and Felix Ly, Canada China Trade Council, Toronto

Academic

Nancy Adler, Professor, McGill University, Montreal
Lorraine Spiess, Princeton University, New Jersey

Government

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Foreign Embassies

Mr. Deddy Hendarna, Embassy of Indonesia, Ottawa